

قُرْآنٌ حَیْدٌ



# THE HOLY QURAN

WITH

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

AND

COMMENTARY

VOLUME 1

SŪRAH AL-FĀTIḤAH – SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH

*Published under the auspices of  
Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Masroor Aḥmad,  
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and Supreme Head of the Worldwide  
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE (1988 Edition)

This five volume commentary of the Holy Quran is an English translation of the commentary on the Holy Quran by the Second Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II.

His published work on the Holy Quran comprises a ten volume commentary in Urdu (*Tafseer-e-Kabir*) covering the following Surahs: *Al-Fatihah & Al-Baqarah*, *Yunus* to *Al-Ankabut* and from *Al-Naba* to *Al-Nas*. The present English commentary is based on that commentary. As far as the remaining Surahs are concerned, that is chapters: *Al-i-Imran* to *Al-Taubah* and from *Al-Ahqaf* to *Al-Mursalat*, the compiling Editors have made use of the extensive notes prepared by the late Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II in preparing a detailed and comprehensive commentary which he was unfortunately unable to complete in his life time. The commentary of such chapters is nonetheless based on his own deliberations.

This commentary is a unique masterpiece. It is an excellent exegesis on the true meaning of the Holy Quran. Although no commentary can ever claim to encompass the final interpretation of the Holy Quran, the manner in which this rich treasure has been prised open by an author who had deep insight into the meaning of the Holy Quran, has certainly set the standard by which all future commentaries ought to be judged.

An index and the following listings have been added in the present edition at the end of the fifth volume:

Table of contents of the Index

Alphabetical listing of chapters of the Holy Quran.

Important Arabic words and expressions explained in the commentary

The Index of subjects.

The Publishers acknowledge and sincerely thank the following members of U. S. A. Jamaat in particular and their helpers in general for the very careful and hard work in preparing these listings and the index so exhaustively:

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The cost of publishing this five-volume commentary has been met jointly by members of the Ahmadiyya Community in the United States of America and the United Kingdom on the happy occasion of the thanksgiving Centenary Jubilee Celebrations of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Community in Islam.

The funds generated from its sale will be recycled in the further publication of the Holy Quran. May Allah grant abundant reward to all those who have contributed towards this publication.

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## FOREWORD

The Holy Quran is the Word of God Almighty that was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, over a period of 23 years. Since its revelation, the inimitability of its text has been widely acclaimed and acknowledged by friend and foe alike. Its verses made such a miraculous impact that some enemies of Islam, driven by extreme frustration, resorted to calling it magic, accusing the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> of being a sorcerer, and preventing their fellow non-Muslims from hearing its recitation. Nevertheless, it was only a matter of time before its greatest enemies became its greatest admirers, or were destroyed in the very process of seeking its destruction.

Allah the Exalted says in the Holy Quran that He Himself would safeguard it:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

Verily We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian. (Al-Ḥijr 15:10)

Under the close and careful guidance of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, the earliest Muslims—including the scribes, and those who had memorized the Book—exercised great care and precaution in its compilation, recitation, and preservation. Meticulous care was taken to ensure that the words of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> and the personal notes of his Companions<sup>ra</sup> were not intermixed with the Word of God.

Once the text had been fully preserved and disseminated widely, the need was felt for commentaries. However, as the Word of God is replete with sublime prophecies and profound verities, the infinite magnificence of the Holy Quran can never be fully comprehended in any commentary. Nevertheless, to help readers understand the historical context and significance of the revealed verses, several commentaries were written by eminent scholars. These commentaries generally relied on the Ḥadith, Sunnah, lexicons, and historical texts. However, in this process, some went to the extent of accepting the traditions of the Jews and Christians in commenting upon some verses. In the last few centuries, some orientalists have written commentaries on the Holy Quran and have critiqued some verses based upon their own traditions and perceptions of history.

The Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Imām Mahdī<sup>as</sup> was commissioned to revive faith and establish the law of Islam. Accordingly, his very first book,

*Barāhīn-e-Aḥmadiyya*, was devoted to establish the divine origin of the Holy Quran and the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad<sup>sa</sup>.

The Five Volume Commentary is based upon the divinely inspired commentaries made by Ḥaḍrat al-Muṣleḥ al-Mau'ūd, Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad<sup>ra</sup>, the second Successor of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>. It builds upon the early Islamic sources and the divinely inspired insights of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> to bring a fresh new perspective on the Quran's versatility and meaning. It also effectively and forcefully responds to the criticism of the Latter Day orientalisks.

The current edition of the Five Volume Commentary corrects scribal errors and makes minor editorial changes to promote readability. Typesetting and initial formatting of this edition of the Five Volume Commentary was done by Wakalat-e-Ishā'at under the supervision of Mirza Anas Aḥmad, M.A., M.Litt., (Oxon.). Final proofreading and valuable suggestions for improvement were provided by various individuals, including the following: Khalil Malik, Rashida Kalim Rana, Naser-ud-Din Shams, Sardar Anees Ahmad, Sabahat Ahmad Cheema, Hassan Khan, Faraz Husain, Abdul-Wahab Mirza, Qamar Ahmed Zafar, Zulfiqar Abbasi, Ahmad Nooruddeen Jangeerkhan, Aneeq ur Rehman, Nafees Qamar Ahmed, and Syed Tanwir Mujtaba. May Allah the Almighty grant all of them the best reward in this life and the Hereafter. *Āmīn*.

**Al-Ḥāj Munir-ud-Din Shams**

Additional Wakīl-ut-Taṣnīf

London, England

September 2018

## **PREFACE**

### **(1988 Edition)**

It is proposed to publish the Commentary of the Quran in three volumes. This, the First Volume, comprises the first nine chapters of the Holy Book.

The Arabic text has been given side by side with the English translation. A mere translation without the text is likely, in the long run, to endanger the purity of the text besides depriving the reader of the opportunity of comparison.

The annotations of the text have been generally divided into two parts. The first deals with Important Words in the verse under comment. These words, along with other words derived from the same root, particularly those occurring in other parts of the Quran, have been explained and examples given to illustrate their different uses. These explanations are based on the standard lexicons of the Arabic language, such as the *Lisān al-‘Arab*, the *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, the *Mufradāt* of Imām Rāghib, the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by E. W. Lane and the *Aqrab al-Mawārid*. As regards the translation, our procedure has been to base the meaning of every word first on the corroborative testimony of other parts of the Quran and secondly on the context. The words printed in italics have been introduced to explain the meaning of the text, there being no words corresponding to them in the original.

The second part consists of explanatory notes or Commentary. Every note first derives its authority from the tenor and spirit of the Quran as expressed in various other places. Next to the Quran precedence is given to the Ḥadīth and then come the standard dictionaries of the Arabic language. Last of all, recourse has been had to the evidence of history which was necessary for the explanation of such verses as refer to well-known historical events.

In the course of the preparation of these notes light has been thrown from time to time on the order which runs through the verses of each chapter, the one following the other in natural sequence; and a careful perusal of these notes will convince the reader that the Quran forms a thoroughly coherent and consistent reading.

Special care is taken in the Commentary to refute the principal objections raised against Islam by Christian writers. These objections are based either on ignorance or on deliberate misrepresentation of the true teachings of Islam on the part of these writers. Refutation of such objections

helps to remove much bias and prejudice against Islam and to create an atmosphere for a better appreciation of its teachings.

A system of cross-references has been introduced. These cross-references have been placed below the text and the translation. They give at a glance the various places where the subject of a particular verse has been dealt with in the Quran.

An Introduction is prefixed to each chapter, in addition to the General Introduction which serves as an introduction to the whole Book. The Introduction to each chapter discusses the place and date of its revelation and gives a summary of its contents and the relation it has with the chapters preceding or following it. It also provides sufficient material for the reader to understand and realize that not only the verses of the various chapters but also the specific position of each chapter itself is governed by an intelligent order.

The abbreviations CH. and PT. appearing at the top of each page stand for Chapter and Part respectively. The Quran has been divided into two sets of divisions, (a) *Sūrās* or Chapters and (b) *Sipārās* or Parts. The division of the Quran into *Sūrās* is made according to its subject matter and has the authority of the Holy Prophet, and of the Quran itself for each of these chapters has been given the name of *Sūra* in the Quran itself, as in 2:24 and 24:2. The total number of the *Sūrās* is 114.

The division into *Juzws*, *Sipārās* or Parts, however, is arbitrary and has no reference to the subject-matter. The Quran has been divided into 30 equal Parts for the convenience of readers.

The number of Chapters and Parts is shown on the top of each page. In numbering the verses we have followed the system in vogue in the standard editions of the Quran in India, with the exception that in our numbering *Bismillah* is counted as the first verse of every chapter, while in other editions the verse following *Bismillah* is numbered as the first verse of the chapter. Chapter 9, however, is an exception to this rule. It does not begin with *Bismillah*, and therefore in this chapter our numbering is identical with that of other editions of the Quran. Our numbering of the notes is continuous. It does not end where a *Sūra* ends but is continued into the next *Sūra* to the end of the Book.

In references the figure on the left side of the colon shows the number of the chapter, while that on its right the number of the verse. It should also be noted that when reference is to a chapter of the Quran, the word Quran is invariably omitted for brevity's sake. Thus 20:8 refers to the 8th verse of the 20th chapter of the Quran. In references to other religious Scriptures,

## PREFACE

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however, the name of the book is invariably mentioned, though generally in an abbreviated form. Thus Gen. 5:6 means the 6th verse of the fifth chapter of Genesis, the first book of Moses.

In using quotations, we have followed the system now in vogue in standard works. In quotations which exceed one line inverted commas have been avoided, but the quotations are given in closer type in order to distinguish them from the rest of the matter. Brief quotations, however, have been enclosed by inverted commas.

We cannot close this prefatory note without acknowledging our sincere thanks to Dr. A. J. Arberry, the well-known Orientalist, and Sir Ronald Storrs, K.C.M.G., C.B.E., ex-High Commissioner of Palestine for the valuable suggestions they made in regard to the translation of the text and to Mr. F. W. Bustin, Editor, The Civil & Military Gazette, Lahore, who kindly revised the whole manuscript.

THE EDITORS

## Books of Reference with Their Abbreviated Titles

Some commentators have given single letters or a group of letters as abbreviations for the authorities they have quoted. These are not of much help to the reader, who has to turn to the list of abbreviations again and again in order to ascertain to which authority the letter refers. But it also seems cumbersome to give the names of the authorities in full. So we have followed a middle course and have given a shortened form of the name, which generally consists in a part of the name of the book or its author. Thus, for instance, instead of *Al-Baḥrul-Muḥīṭ* by Abū Ḥayyān, we have simply given the word *Muḥīṭ*, and for *Sīratun-Nabī* by Ibn Hishām, the abbreviated form *Hishām* is given. These abbreviated names easily suggest to the reader the book or the author to which reference is made. No shortened form, however, has been used for the authorities that are not frequently quoted. In case of the books of the Bible, we have made use of the abbreviations that are generally used in Christian literature. Following is a list of well-known works of reference and other important books to which we have referred in this Commentary. We have taken special care to give the full name of each book and its author along with its abbreviated title.

### Books of Ḥadīth

Shortened name.	Full name with the name of the author.
Bukhārī	.. <i>The Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī</i> , by Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl Bukhārī.
Muslim	.. <i>The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim</i> , by Ḥāfiẓ Abul-Ḥusain Muslim bin Ḥajjāj al-Qushairī.
Tirmidhī	.. <i>The Jāmi‘ of Tirmidhī</i> by Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad bin ‘Īsā Tirmidhī.
Dāwūd or Abū Dāwūd	.. <i>Sunan of Abū Dāwūd</i> by Ḥāfiẓ Sulaimān bin Ash‘ath Abū Dāwūd.
Mājah	.. <i>Sunan of Ibn Mājah</i> by Muḥammad bin Yazīd Abū ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mājah Qazwīnī.
Musnad	.. <i>Musnad of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal</i> by Imām Abū ‘Abdullāh Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.
Nasa’ī	.. <i>Sunan of Nasa’ī</i> by Ḥāfiẓ Abū ‘Abdur-Raḥmān Aḥmad bin Shu‘aib Nasa’ī.
Mu’aṭṭa	.. <i>Mu’aṭṭa</i> by Imām Mālik.
Baihaqī	.. <i>Sunan of Baihaqī</i> , by Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin Ḥusain al-Baihaqī.
‘Ummāl	.. <i>Kanz-ul-Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wal Af‘āl</i> by Shaikh ‘Alā-ud-Dīn ‘Alī al-Muttaqī.
Quṭnī	.. <i>Sunan of Dār Quṭnī</i> by Ḥāfiẓ ‘Alī bin ‘Umar ad-Dār Quṭnī.
Qaṣṭalānī	.. <i>Irshād as-Sārī</i> by Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb Qaṣṭalānī.

Bārī	..	<i>Faṭḥul-Bārī</i> by Abul-Faḍl Shihāb-ud-Dīn Aḥmad bin ‘Alī ‘Asqalānī.
Ṣaghīr	..	<i>Al-Jāmi‘-aṣ-Ṣaghīr fī Aḥādīth al-Bashīr an-Nadhīr</i> .
‘Asākīr	..	<i>Ibn ‘Asākīr</i> by Abul-Qāsim ‘Alī bin al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Asākīr.
Merdawaih	..	<i>Merdawaih</i> by Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin Mūsā bin Merdawaih.
Ṭaḥāwī	..	<i>Sharah Ma‘ānī al-Āthār</i> by Abū Ja‘far aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī.
Manāwī	..	<i>At-Tafsīr</i> , exposition of <i>al-Jāmi‘-aṣ-Ṣaghīr</i> , by Imām ‘Abdur-Ra‘ūf al-Manāwī.

### Commentaries of the Quran

Jarīr	..	<i>Commentary of the Qur‘ān</i> by Imām Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī.
Kathīr	..	<i>The Tafsīr</i> of Abul Fidā Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr.
Kashshāf	..	<i>Al-Kashshāf ‘an Ghawāmiḍ at-Tanzīl</i> by Imām Maḥmūd Ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī.
Muḥīṭ	..	<i>Al-Baḥr-ul-Muḥīṭ</i> by Athīr-ud-Dīn Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf of Granada (Spain), alias Abū Ḥayyān.
Manthūr	..	<i>Durri Manthūr</i> by Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl-ud-Dīn ‘Abdur-Raḥmān Suyūṭī.
Ma‘ānī	..	<i>Rūḥ-ul-Ma‘ānī</i> by Abul Faḍl Shihāb-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Baghdādī.
Baiḍāwī	..	<i>Anwār-ut-Tanzīl</i> by Qāḍī Nāṣir-ud-Dīn Abū Sa‘īd Baiḍāwī.
Qaḍīr	..	<i>Faṭḥ-ul-Qaḍīr</i> by Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī ash-Shaukānī.
Faṭḥ	..	<i>Faṭḥ-ul-Bayān</i> by Abuṭ-Ṭayyib Ṣiddīq Ibn Ḥasan.
Rāzī	..	<i>At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr</i> by Imām Muḥammad Fakhr-ud-Dīn Rāzī.
Bayān	..	<i>Rūḥ-ul-Bayān</i> by Shaikh Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī.
Tafsīr	..	<i>Tafsīr-e-Kabīr</i> by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Head of the Aḥmadiyya Community.
Tha‘labī	..	<i>Jawāhir-ul-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr-il-Qur‘ān</i> by Shaikh ‘Abdur-Raḥmān Tha‘labī.
Qurṭubī	..	<i>Qurṭubī</i> by Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī.

### Lexicons, Encyclopaedias and Periodicals

Biḥār	..	<i>Majma‘ Biḥār-ul-Anwār</i> , by Shaikh Muḥammad Ṭāhir of Gujrat.
Kulliyāt or Baqā	..	<i>Al-Kulliyāt</i> by Abul Baqā al-Ḥusainī.
Mufradāt	..	<i>Al-Mufradāt fī Gharā‘ib-al-Qur‘ān</i> by Shaikh Abul-Qāsim Ḥusain Ibn Muḥammad ar-Rāghib.
Lisān	..	<i>Lisān-ul-‘Arab</i> by Imām Abul Faḍl Jamāl-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Mukarram.
Tāj	..	<i>Tāj-ul-‘Arūs</i> by Abul Faiḍ Sayyid Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusainī.
Lane	..	<i>Arabic-English Lexicon</i> by E. W. Lane.
Qāmūs	..	<i>The Qāmūs</i> by Shaikh Naṣr Abul Wafā.
Ṣiḥāḥ	..	<i>The Ṣiḥāḥ</i> by Abun-Naṣr Ismā‘īl Jauharī.
Aqrab	..	<i>Aqrab-ul-Mawārid</i> by Sa‘īd al-Khaurī ash-Shartūnī.
Miṣbāḥ	..	<i>Al-Miṣbāḥ-ul-Munīr</i> by Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Fayūmī.

Gesenius	..	<i>The Hebrew-English Lexicon</i> by Gesenius.
Enc. Bri.	..	<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i> , 14th edition.
Enc. Rel. Eth.	..	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i> .
Jew. Enc.	..	<i>Jewish Encyclopaedia</i> .
Enc. Bib.	..	<i>Encyclopaedia Biblica</i> .
Enc. Islam	..	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> .
Rev. Rel.	..	<i>The Review of Religions</i> , Qadian.
Cruden	..	<i>Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and the New Testaments and the Apocrypha</i> .

## History and Geography

Ṭabarī	..	<i>Tārīkh-ur-Rusul wal-Mulūk</i> by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī.
Ishāq	..	<i>Ibn Ishāq</i> .
Sīrat	..	<i>Sīrat Khātām-un-Nabīyyīn</i> by Mirzā Bashīr Aḥmad, M. A., Qadian.
Muir	..	<i>Life of Mahomet</i> by Sir William Muir, K. C. S. I. (1923).
The Caliphate	..	<i>The Caliphate, Its Rise, Decline and Fall</i> by Sir William Muir, K. C. S. I.
Hishām	..	<i>Sīrat-un-Nabī</i> by Shaikh Abū Muḥammad 'Abdul-Mālik Ibn Hishām.
Futūh	..	<i>Futūḥ-ul-Buldān</i> by Balādhārī.
Ṭabaqāt	..	<i>Aṭ-Ṭabaqāt-al-Kabīr</i> by Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd.
Khamīs	..	<i>Tārīkh-ul-Khamīs</i> by Shaikh Ḥusain Ibn Muḥammad ad-Diyār al-Bakrī.
Zurqānī	..	<i>Sharḥ Zurqānī</i> by Imām Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdul-Bāqī az-Zurqānī.
Ghābbah	..	<i>Usdul-Ghābbah fī Ma'rifaṭiṣ-Ṣaḥābah</i> by Ḥāfiẓ Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad.
Ma'ād	..	<i>Zād-ul-Ma'ād fī Ḥaḍyi Khair-al-'Ibād</i> by Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr Ibn Ayyūb ad-Damishqī.
Buldān	..	<i>Mu'jam al-Buldān</i> by Abū 'Abdullāh Yāqūt Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Baghdādī.
Dhahab	..	<i>Murūj-udh-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jauhar</i> by 'Allāma Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Ḥusain al-Mas'ūdī.
Athīr	..	<i>Kāmil Ibn Athīr</i> by Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Abul Karam <i>alias</i> Ibn-ul-Athīr.
Mawāhib	..	<i>Mawāhib al-Ladunniyya</i> by Shihāb-ud-Dīn Aḥmad Qaṣṭalānī.
Khaldūn	..	<i>Tārīkh-ul-Imām Ibn Khaldūn</i> by 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn al-Maghribī.
Ḥalbiyyah	..	<i>Sīrat-ul-Ḥalbiyyah</i> by 'Aliyy Ibn Burhān-ud-Dīn al-Ḥalbī.

## Taṣawwuf and 'Aqā'id

Futūḥāt	..	<i>Al-Futūḥāt-ul-Makkīyyah</i> by Muḥy-ud-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī.
'Awārif	..	<i>'Awārif-ul-Ma'ārif</i> by Abul-Ḥaqq 'Umar Ibn Muḥammad.
Zāhiri	..	<i>Dāwūd Zāhiri</i> .



- Malā'ikah .. *Malāi'katullāh* by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ II.

### Science of Philology and Polite Literature

- Mubarrad .. *Kitāb-ul-Kāmil* by Abul 'Abbās Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad.  
Mu'allaqāt .. *Sab'a Mu'allaqāt*, the seven well-known poems by seven eminent Pre-Islamic poets.

### Grammar

- Sībawaih .. *Sībawaih* by Abul Bashr 'Amr Sībawaih.  
Wright .. *A Grammar of the Arabic language* by W. Wright, LL.D.

### Jurisprudence

- Muḥallā .. *Al-Muḥallā* by Imām Abū Muḥammad 'Alī Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sa'īd Ibn Ḥazm.  
Merdawaih .. *Ibn Merdawaih*.

### Ma'ānī

- Mukhtaṣar .. *Al-Mukhtaṣar al-Ma'ānī* by Mas'ūd Ibn 'Umar *alias* Sa'd Taftāzānī.  
Muṭawwal .. *Al-Muṭawwal* by Mas'ūd Ibn 'Umar *alias* Sa'd Taftāzānī.

### Works of the Promised Messiah

- Tauḍīḥ .. *Tauḍīḥ-e-Marām*.  
Ā'inah .. *Ā'ina'-e-Kamālāt-e-Islām*.  
Ḥaqīqat .. *Ḥaqīqatul-Waḥī*.  
Izāla .. *Izāla-'e-Auhām*.  
Teachings .. *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*.

### Books of the Bible

- Gen. .. *Genesis*.  
Exod. .. *Exodus*.  
Lev. .. *Leviticus*.  
Num. .. *Numbers*.  
Deut. .. *Deuteronomy*.  
Neh. .. *Nehemiah*.  
Isa. .. *Isaiah*.  
Ezek. .. *Ezekiel*.  
Mal. .. *Malachi*.  
Matt. .. *Matthew*.  
Rev. .. *Revelation of St. John, The New Testament*.

## Miscellaneous

Among other works which are not included in the above list, but which have been consulted in the course of the preparation of the Commentary, may be mentioned the following (the list is by no means exhaustive):

- |   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| Asās  | .. | <i>Ḥaqīqat-ul-Asās.</i>                |
| Māwardī   | .. | <i>Al-Māwardī.</i>                     |
| <i>Izālat-ul-Khifā ‘an Khilāfat al-Khulafā’</i>                   | by | Ḥaḍrat Shāh Walī Allah of Delhi.       |
| <i>The Al-Ḥakam</i> , Qadian.                                     |    |  |
| <i>The Al-Faḍl</i> , Qadian.                                      |    |  |
| <i>The Tomb of Jesus</i>  | by | Dr. M. M. Ṣādiq, Qadian.               |
| The Bible.  |    |  |
| <i>The Zend-Avesta.</i>   |    |  |
| <i>The Dasātir.</i>   |    |  |
| The Jāmāspi   | by | Jāmāsap, First Successor of Zoroaster. |
| Dictionary & Glossary of the Quran                                | by | John Penrice.                          |
| Historians’ History of the World.                                 |    |  |
| History of the Arabs  | by | P. K. Hitti.                           |
| The History of Napoleon Bonaparte.                                | by | John Abbott                            |
| E. Renan’s History of the People of Israel.                       |    |  |
| Josephus: History of the Jewish Nation.                           |    |  |
| Hutchinson’s History of the Nations.                              |    |  |
| The Apocrypha.  |    |  |
| The Dawn of Conscience  | by | James Henry Breasted.                  |
| Moses and Monotheism  | by | Sigmund Freud.                         |
| Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire                              | by | Edward Gibbon.                         |
| Biblical Cyclopaedia  | by | J. Eadie.                              |
| Diodorus Siculus (Translation by C. M, Oldfather, London, 1935.)  |    |  |
| The Pilgrimage  | by | Lieut. Burton.                         |
| The Jewish Foundation of Islam.                                   |    |  |
| Scofield Reference Bible.   |    |  |
| Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature (New York, 1877).              |    |  |
| Leaves from Three Ancient Qurans, edited by Rev. A. Mingana, D.D. |    |  |
| Translation of the Targums  | by | J. W. Etheridge.                       |
| Capital Punishment in the Twentieth Century                       | by | E. Roy Calvert.                        |
| Lalita Vistara (Sk.).   |    |  |
| Buddha-Charita (Sk.).   |    |  |
| The Making of Humanity  | by | Robert Briffault.                      |
| On Heroes And Hero-Worship  | by | Thomas Carlyle.                        |
| History of Palestine and the Jews                                 | by | John Kitto (London, 1844).             |

## Books of Reference

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- American Medical Journal.  
Indo-Aryans by R. Mitra, LL.D., C.I.E.  
The Talmud (Selections by H. Polano).  
Commentary by C. J. Ellicott, Lord Bishop of Gloucester.  
Commentaries on the Old and the published by Society for Promoting  
New Testaments Christian Knowledge, London.  
Sharḥ as-Sunnah by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusain Ibn Mas‘ūd  
al-Baghwī.  
Faṣl-ul-Khiṭāb by Ḥaḍrat Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn  
Khalīfatul-Masīḥ I.  
Khuṭubāt-e-Aḥmadiyyah by Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, K.C.S.I.

## System of Transliteration

In transliterating Arabic words we have followed the system adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society.

ا at the beginning of a word, pronounced as *a*, *i*, *u* preceded by a very slight aspiration, like *h* in the English word 'honour'.

ث *th*, pronounced like *th* in the English word 'thing'.

ح *h*, a guttural aspirate, stronger than *h*.

خ *kh*, pronounced, like the Scotch *ch* in 'loch'.

ذ *dh*, pronounced like the English *th* in 'that', 'with'.

ص *s*, strongly articulated *s*.

ض *d*, similar to the English *th* in 'this'.

ط *t*, strongly articulated palatal *t*.

ظ *z*, strongly articulated *z*.

ع ' , a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.

غ *gh*, a sound approaches very nearly in the *r* 'grasseye' in French, and in the German *r*. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the 'gargling' position whilst pronouncing it.

ق *q*, a deep guttural *k* sound.

ء ' , a sort of catch in the voice.

Short vowels are represented by *a* for ا (like *u* in 'bud'); *i* for اِ (like *i* in 'bid'); *u* for اُ (like *oo* in 'wood'); the long vowels by *ā* for اَ or اِ (like *a* in 'father'); *ī* for اِي or اِ (like *ee* in 'deep'); *ai* for اِي (like *i* in 'site'); *ū* for اُ (like *oo* in 'root'); *au* for اَو (resembling *ou* in 'sound').

The consonants not included in the above list have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe.

There are, however, some names which have not been spelt according to the rules of transliteration. They are names which frequently occur in Ahmadiyya literature and so it has been thought more convenient to give them in the form in which they are familiar to our readers. Some of these names are the following:

- (1) The Quran.
- (2) Muhammad (on whom be peace and the blessings of God).
- (3) Ahmadiyya.
- (4) Ahmad or Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.
- (5) Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih

II, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community

Under the transliteration rules, the above names should have been spelt thus:

- (1) The Qur'ān.
- (2) Muḥammad.
- (3) Aḥmadiyya.
- (4) Aḥmad or Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.
- (5) Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Khalīfat al-Masīḥ II, Head of the Aḥmadiyya Community



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### Need of a New Translation and a New Commentary

In presenting this new translation and commentary of the Quran, we think it proper to point out that this is not a commercial enterprise nor does its main interest lie in its being new.

Our effort has been prompted by the belief that, while a new translation is needed today by those who do not know Arabic, a new commentary is needed by all, whether they know Arabic or not, and this for two reasons:

(i) Translations prepared by non-Muslims (with the exception of translations into Urdu and Persian) have all been prepared by authors who had little or no knowledge of the Arabic language and who were, therefore, unable even to understand the Arabic text, not to speak of being able to translate it. Some of them translated from other translations, and this made the meaning only more remote from the original.

(ii) For their interpretation of the text, these translations rely not on a knowledge of the Arabic language, but on the older commentaries. A commentary, however, is largely a matter of individual opinion; part of which may be accepted by one person, part by another, and part by none at all. A translation based on a commentary may be said to reflect an individual opinion, not the true meaning of the text.

In view of these defects, there is a genuine and pressing need for a new translation that is prepared by Arabic-knowing scholars and firmly based on a knowledge of the Arabic language, its canon, and idiom.

### Present Translation Fulfils the Need

The present English Translation is intended to fulfil these two requirements and, God willing, it will be followed in due course by similar translations into other languages.

The Arabic language is a language with a philosophical design. Its words have been designed with a purpose. Its roots have been devised for the expression of elementary emotions and experiences, and these by slight variations in actual use give to Arabic words a significance both wide and deep. To turn them adequately into any other language is well-nigh impossible, and, as translation alone is not enough, we have to add explanatory notes to a translation to show the breadth of meaning hidden in the text. Our own Translation is no exception to the rule. It cannot hope to

bring out the complete or even the approximate meaning of the original. It may only hope to bring out one of its possible meanings. To make up this deficiency, therefore, we have added explanatory notes to our translation. But even these are not comprehensive. They do not bring out the full sense of the text, but they compensate to some extent for the limitations of the translation. Under the sections entitled *Important Words* we have indicated the breadth of meanings which the text possesses; and, for this, we have drawn on lexicons regarded as standard not only by Muslims but also by Arabic-speaking non-Muslims. We trust that a study of this material will deepen the readers' insight into our translation, and convince them that the sense we have sought to put into the Arabic original is not arbitrary but is based upon accepted Arabic usage and canon. Readers with no knowledge of Arabic should feel assured that our rendering, though unacceptable to some, is based on sound Arabic usage and can be dismissed only if evidence of other parts of the Quran, or of sound Arabic usage, points to the contrary.

### **Special Features of this Commentary**

Having said so much about our translation, we wish to say something about our commentary.

Commentaries of the Quran are already many, and an addition to their number seems hard to justify. But we have good reasons for attempting and presenting a new commentary. They are:

(i) As we have said, Arabic words possess an extraordinary breadth of meaning. A translation, consequently, can adopt only one of all possible meanings. It was necessary, therefore, to append notes to the translation, and indicate other possible meanings of the text.

(ii) All the large and systematic commentaries of the Quran are in Arabic, and it should be obvious that those who cannot read the Quran in Arabic can make no use of these commentaries.

(iii) Explanatory notes added to their translations by non-Muslim authors are inadequate for two reasons:

- (a) They have been influenced by the writings of the opponents of Islam;
- (b) Their authors had no knowledge of Arabic, or very little. They were unable to read the larger and more reliable commentaries. To these commentaries, therefore, European translators make no reference. They refer only to the minor and more popular commentaries. If there is a reference to any of the larger works, it is taken from another work, not from the original.

(iv) Comprehension of any systematic or scientific book requires knowledge not only of the language in which the book is written and of the



commentaries on the book which experts in the language or in the subject may have written, but also requires close study of the book itself and insight into the terminology, idiom and fundamentals which the book employs and from which its comments derive their significance. Those who seek to interpret the book without a study of the book itself will have little help from the commentaries. European translators and commentators of the Quran do not seem to have made the necessary close study of the Holy Book. No wonder, therefore, that their comments often border on the ludicrous.

(v) Every age gives rise to new sciences in the light of which every book which professes to teach anything is exposed to a new criticism. The value of a book is either more securely established, or it becomes more doubtful than ever. The Quran, being no exception to the rule, demanded a new commentary in light of new knowledge. Without it we cannot judge how far the Quran is still effective as a teaching or how far it has surpassed its own record.

When the first commentaries of the Quran were written, the Bible in Arabic did not exist. There was not even one complete copy. The fragments which had been translated into Arabic were not available to the commentators of the Quran. Whenever, therefore, they had to discuss parts of the Quran containing references to the Bible or the Mosaic tradition, they had to rely on hearsay or their own speculations. Needless to say, their comments are at times disappointing and at times ridiculous. European writers attribute their mistakes to the Quran and hold up the Holy Book to ridicule. They forget that these commentators did not know the Bible. They relied on popular accounts or on what they heard from Jewish and Christian scholars who passed on to the unsuspecting commentators of the Quran material drawn sometimes from their books of tradition instead of the Bible and sometimes from their own mischievous imagination. In this transaction the commentators no doubt betrayed simplicity and lack of caution, but the Jewish and Christian scholars betrayed lack of honesty and piety. European writers of our time, therefore, have far more reason to deplore the dishonesty of their forefathers than to ridicule the Muslim commentators of the Quran. But now it is different. Now knowledge of the Bible has become common. Arabic, Latin and Greek works have become accessible to Muslim scholars and we are able to comment in a new way upon parts of the Quran which contain references to the Bible and the Mosaic tradition.

(vi) Until our own time, controversy between one religion and another related less to moral and social ideals and more to belief and ritual. Because of this, the teaching of the Quran bearing on moral ideas and moral training and on social, economic, and political relations was never discussed. Today, however, the world thinks much more in terms of these practical matters. It

was necessary, therefore, to attempt a commentary which should deal more adequately with the practical teaching of the Quran.

(vii) Being a revealed Book, the Quran contains prophecies. A discussion of these prophecies is not possible until after they have been fulfilled. For this reason also we needed a new commentary which should enumerate prophecies of the Quran which have been fulfilled so far and which constitute an important part of the proof that the Quran is a revealed Book of God.

(viii) The Quran deals with all other religions and ideologies. It incorporates in itself the best part of their teaching, points to their weaknesses and supplies their deficiencies. Early Muslim commentators were ignorant of what these religions and ideologies taught and stood for. They were, therefore, unable to appreciate completely what the Quran had to teach about them. Now all the most obscure teachings have come to light so that the teaching of the Quran relating to other teachings has become evident to its devotees. To compensate for this shortcoming in the older commentaries, we needed a new commentary of the Quran.

For these reasons we feel that our translation and commentary not only does not call for apology, but also meets a genuine and important need. In presenting it we discharge a duty.

We hope that those who read our translation and commentary with care and without prejudice will feel constrained to view Islam from a new angle. We hope that they will become convinced that true Islam is not full of faults, as Western writers imagine it to be, but that it is rather a well laid out garden of the spirit where a visitor may dwell with every kind of fragrance and beauty and which affords a vision of the Paradise promised by all teachers of religion.

### **Other Revealed Books**

When the Quran was revealed about 1325 years ago, there were in the world many religions and many religious books. In and near Arabia there were people who believed in the Old and the New Testaments. Many Arabs had become Christian or had developed a leaning towards Christianity. Arabs were being converted to the Jewish religion. Among converts were Ka'b bin Ashraf, a Medinite chief and a notorious enemy of Islam, and his father. Ka'b's father belonged to the Banū Tā'ī tribe. He became so enamoured of the Jewish faith that the Jew, Abū Rāfi' bin Abū Ḥaqīq, gave his daughter in marriage to him and Ka'b was born of this marriage (Al-Khamīs, Vol. 1). In Mecca itself, apart from Christian slaves, there were Meccans who leaned towards Christianity. Waraqah bin Naufal, cousin of Khadijah, the first wife of the Holy Prophet, entertained the Christian belief. He also had some

knowledge of Hebrew and translated the Hebrew Gospels into Arabic. We have in *Bukhārī*:

Waraqah bin Naufal had accepted Christianity in the period of darkness; and used to translate the Gospels from Hebrew into Arabic (*Bukhārī*, ch. on *Bad'ul Waḥī*).

At the other end of Arabia lived the Iranians, and they also believed in a Prophet and a Book. Though the Zend-Avesta had suffered changes at human hands, it was yet held in reverence by many hundreds of thousands of believers and a powerful State was at its back. In India the Vedas had been adored for thousands of years. There was also the Gita of Sri Krishna and the teaching of the Buddha. Confucianism held sway in China but the influence of the Buddha was increasing.

### **Need of the Quran**

In the presence of all these books and teachings, did the world need another book? This is the question which should occur to everyone who starts upon a study of the Quran. Its answer will take many forms:

First, was not this division between religion and religion reason enough for the coming of yet another religion to unite all? Secondly, was not the human mind to undergo a process of evolution similar to that which the human body had already gone through? And, just as physical evolution had ultimately become established, were not mental and spiritual evolution destined towards an ultimate perfection which was the very end of human existence? Thirdly, had not earlier books become so defective that a new book had now become a universal necessity which was met by the Quran? Fourthly, did earlier religions regard their Messages as absolutely final? Did they not believe in continued spiritual progress? Did they not continuously assure their followers of a coming Message which would unite mankind and lead them to their ultimate objective?

The answer to these four questions is the answer to the question concerning the need of the Quran in the presence of earlier Books and Messages.

We proceed to answer these questions one by one.

Was not division between religion and religion reason enough for the coming of a new Teaching which would unite all earlier teachings?

### **God of the Bible-A National God**

Religion has a twofold purpose: (i) it enables man to meet his Maker; and (ii) it teaches him his duty towards his fellow men. All religions existing at the advent of Islam were not only different but mutually contradictory. The Bible

talked not of God, but of the God of Israel. We read in it again and again:

And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me (I Samuel 25:32).

And also thus said the king, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it (I Kings 1:48).

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord (I Chronicles 16:36).

And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying.... (II Chronicles 6:4).

God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things (Psalms 72:18).

Jesus also regarded himself as a teacher for Banī Isrā'īl. If others approached him, he would send them away. In Matthew 15:21-26 we read:

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs.

Jesus also taught the apostles:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you (Matt. 7:6).

### **Vedas Also A National Scripture**

Among the followers of the Vedas, the reading of the Vedas had become so exclusive a prerogative of the high castes that Gotama Rishi says:

If a Sudra happens to hear the Vedas then it is the king's duty to drop molten lead and wax into his ears; if a Sudra were to recite the Vedic Mantras the king should cut off his tongue and if he try to read the Vedas, the king should cut his body (Gotama Smṛti:12).

The teaching about "foemen" in the Vedas is extreme and barbarous.

In the Atharva-Veda the orthodox are taught to put the non-Vedics in chains and to plunder their houses:

Consume, with lion aspect, all their hamlets, with tiger aspect, drive away thy foemen. Sole lord and leader and allied with Indra, seize, conqueror, thine enemies' possessions (Atharva-Veda IV, 22:7).

Similarly Vedic prayers addressed to the sun, moon, fire, Indra, and even grass, seek the destruction of the non-Vedic dharmis. Thus we have:

Bewildering the senses of our foemen, seize thou their bodies and depart, O Apva. Attack them, set their hearts on fire and burn them: so let our foes abide in utter darkness.

Whetting thy bolt and thy sharp blade,

O Indra, crush thou the foe and scatter

Those who hate us (Sama-Veda Part II, ix, iii, 9).

Blind, O my foemen, shall ye be even as headless serpents are: may Indra slay each best of you, when Agni's flame hath struck you down (Sama-Veda Part II, ix, iii, 8).

Cleave through, O Darbha, amulet, my foes', my adversaries' heart;

Rise thou and batter down their heads (Atharva-Veda XIX, 28:4).

We also have:

Do not hold discourses with non-Vedic dharmis (Gotama-dharm Sut. v).

Should anyone criticize the Vedas, turn him out of the country, that is, condemn him to a life-sentence (Manu Dharm Shastra).

Confucianism and Zoroastrianism also were national religions. They did not address their Messages to the whole world, nor did they try to teach on any large scale. Just as Hinduism regards India as God's favoured land, so does Confucianism regard China as God's own kingdom. There are only two ways to resolve this division and disagreement between religions: either we must hold that there are several gods, or, if God is one, we must prove Him so. Or we must have these conflicting religions replaced by one Teaching.

### **God is One**

The world is far advanced now. We do not need to labour over the point that if the world has a Maker, He is and can only be One Maker. The God of Israel, the God of the Hindus, the God of China and the God of Iran are not different. Nor is the God of Arabia, of Afghanistan and of Europe different. Nor is the God of the Mongols and the God of the Semites different. God is One, even as the law to which the world is subject is one law, and the system which links one part of it to another is one system. Science builds itself on the belief that all natural and mechanical changes are expressions of one law. The world has one principle—motion, as the materialistic philosophers assert. Or, it has One Maker. If this is true, expressions like "the God of Israel", "the God

of the Arabs", and "the God of the Hindus" are meaningless. But if God is One, why should we have so many different religions? Were they the product of the human brain? Was it because of this that every nation and every people worshipped its own God? If these religions were not a human product, how and why did this division come between religion and religion? If ever there was reason for this division, was it proper that the division should continue?

### **Religion – Not a Product of Human Imagination**

As for the question whether these religions were the product of human imagination, the answer is certainly that they were not and this is for several reasons:

Religions well established in the world reveal some distinguishing features:

Firstly, according to all ordinary standards, the founders were men of slender means. They had no power or prestige. Yet they addressed themselves to the great as well as the small and in due course they and their followers rose from a humble to a high position in the world. This proves that they were sustained and supported by a great Power.

Secondly, all founders of religions have been persons highly honoured and valued for the purity of their lives even by those who later, on the announcement of their claims, became their enemies. It is inconceivable that those who did not lie about men, began suddenly to lie about God. The universal acknowledgement of the purity of their lives before the announcement of their claims is proof of the truth of these claims. The Quran stresses this point:

I have indeed lived among you a whole lifetime before this. Will you not then understand? (10:17).

The verse represents the Holy Prophet as saying to his accusers, "I have lived for a lifetime among you, as one of you. You had the chance to observe me at close quarters; you have been witnesses to my truthfulness. How then dare you say that I have today suddenly begun to lie about God?"

Similarly the Quran says:

Verily, Allah has conferred a favour on the Believers by raising among them a Messenger from among themselves (3:165).

The same point is stressed in the verse:

Surely, a Messenger has come unto you from among yourselves (9:128).

That is, "a Messenger to you, who is one of you, not one whom you do not know, but one whom you well know and of whose purity of character you have yourselves been witnesses".

Even of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet of Islam, the Quran makes similar assertions. They were raised from among their own people. It could not be said of them that those whom these Prophets first addressed did not know them well enough. When the inmates of Hell are cast into Hell, God will address them, saying:

Did not Messengers from among yourselves come to you, reciting unto you the Signs of your Lord, and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours? (39:72)

And:

O Company of jinn and men! did not Messengers come to you from among yourselves who related to you My Signs and who warned you of the meeting of this your day? (6:131)

In another place we read:

And We sent among them a Messenger from among themselves, who said, 'Serve Allah. You have no God other than He' (23:33).

Again:

And remember the day when We shall raise up a witness from every people (16:85).

The word "witness" used here means a Prophet raised for a people. On the Day of Judgement, the Prophets will point to themselves as visible proof of what God's communications had done for them. God will put disbelievers to shame, saying, "See what My Prophet has attained to, and to what your disbelief has led!" All the Prophets, we are told, were raised from amongst their own people. The conditions under which each Prophet was brought up and the reactions of each Prophet to these conditions were well known to each people. Each people, therefore, was a witness of the piety and purity of its Prophet. Besides this we also have in the Quran verses such as the following:

And unto 'Ād We sent their brother Hūd (7:66).

And to Thamūd We sent their brother Šālīḥ (7:74).

And to Midian We sent their brother Shu'aib (7:86).

The verses mean that Hūd, Šālīḥ and Shu'aib, were in close association with their respective peoples, so that those peoples could be said to know everything about them. Of Šālīḥ we read that when he announced himself as a Prophet to his people, he was told:

O Šālīḥ, thou wast among us one in whom we placed our hopes. Dost thou forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? (11:63).

Similarly the people of Shu'aib told Shu'aib:

O Shu'aib, does thy prayer bid thee that we should leave what our fathers worshipped, or that we cease to do with our property what we please. Thou art indeed intelligent and right-minded (11:88).

From these passages it is clear that, according to the Quran, the Holy Prophet himself, and Hūd, Šālīḥ, Shu'aib and other Prophets, were not obscure persons little known to their respective peoples. Their people well knew what sort of lives their teachers led and whether they were not honest, God-fearing and pious individuals. Of none of them could it be said that a nondescript pretender had designs upon his own people.

Thirdly, the Founders of religions did not possess those powers and accomplishments which ordinarily make for successful leadership. They knew little or nothing of the arts or culture of their time. Yet what each taught turned out to be something in advance of his time, something pertinent and seasonable. By adopting this teaching, people attained to a great height in civilization and culture, and retained the glory for many centuries. A true religious teacher makes this possible. Yet it is inconceivable that a person innocent of ordinary accomplishments, as soon as he begins to lie about God, should come to have such tremendous powers that his teaching dominates all other teachings current in his time. Such a development is impossible without the help of a powerful God.

### **Revealed Teachings Are Always Against Current Ideas**

Fourthly, when we consider what these founders of religions taught, we find that it has always been contrary to all contemporary trends. If this teaching had been in line with the tendencies of their times, it could be said that these teachers only gave expression to those tendencies. Instead, what they taught was very different from anything they found current. A terrible controversy ensued and it seemed as though the country had been set ablaze. Yet those who chose to deny and controvert the teaching were ultimately themselves compelled to submit to it. This also proves that these teachers were not a product of their times, but were teachers, reformers and Prophets in the sense in which they claimed to be.

In the time of Moses, how novel must have seemed his teaching about One God? When Jesus confronted in his time a materialism born of the worldliness of the Jews and of the vicious influence of Rome, how peculiar must have appeared his stress on the spirit? How out of place must have been his message of forgiveness to a people who trembled under the tyranny of Roman soldiers, groaning all the while for legitimate vengeance? How out of time must have appeared Krishna who taught war on the one hand, and, on the other, a withdrawal from the material world in order to cultivate the spirit. The



Zoroastrian teaching, embracing all aspects of human life, must also have come as a shock to the licentiousness of that time. The Holy Prophet appeared in Arabia and addressed himself to Jews and Christians. How strange it must have appeared to those who believed that there was to be no teaching outside their own! Then he taught the Meccan idolaters that God was One, and that all men were equal. How peculiar must his teaching have seemed to a people who believed intensely in the superiority of their own race! To teach hardened drunkards and gamblers the evils of their ways, to criticize almost everything they believed or did, to give them a new teaching, and then to succeed seems impossible. It is like being able to swim up-stream against a current rushing with tremendous force. It is utterly beyond human capacity.

Fifthly, the Founders of religions have all shown Signs and miracles. Every one of them announced at the outset that his teaching would prevail and that those who might seek to destroy it would themselves be destroyed. They were without means and ill-equipped. Their teachings were contrary to firmly established beliefs and habits of thinking and provoked the fiercest opposition of their people. Yet they succeeded, and what they had foretold came to pass. Why were their prophecies and their promises fulfilled? No doubt there have been others, generals and dictators, who have attained to apparently similar success. But it is not success which is in point. It is success which is foretold, which is attributed to God from the beginning, success on which is staked the Prophet's whole moral reputation and which is achieved in spite the worst opposition. Napoleon, Hitler and Genghis Khān rose high from humble positions. But they did not set themselves against any thought current of their time. Nor did they declare that God had promised them victory in spite of opposition. Nor did they have to confront any wide-spread opposition. The ends they set out to achieve were adored by most of their contemporaries, who perhaps proposed different methods but not different ends. If they suffered defeat, they lost nothing. They still stood high in their people's esteem, and feared nothing. But it was different with Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Zoroaster and the Prophet of Islam. True, they did not fail. But if they had, they would have lost everything. They would not have been proclaimed as heroes, but would have been condemned as pretenders and intriguers. History would have taken scant notice of them and lasting disrepute would have been their reward. Between them and men like Napoleon or Hitler, therefore, there is a world of difference—the same difference as there is between their respective successes. There are not many people who have regard or reverence for Napoleon, Hitler or Genghis Khān. Some regard them as heroes and are completely carried away by their deeds. But can they command true loyalty or obedience? Loyalty and obedience are given only to religious teachers, such as Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Zoroaster and the Holy Prophet of Islam. Many millions of

human beings throughout the ages have done what these teachers bade them do. Many millions have denied themselves what these teachers forbade. Their smallest thoughts, words, and deeds have been subject to what they were taught by their Masters. Do national heroes command even one iota of the loyalty and submission accorded to these teachers? These teachers, therefore, were from God and what they taught was taught by God.

### **Why Teachings of Various Religions Differ**

But the question is: If these teachers were all from God, why did their teachings differ so much one from another? Would God teach different things at different times? Even ordinary mortals try to be consistent and teach the same thing at different times. The answer to this question is that when conditions remain the same, it would be absurd to issue different directions. But when conditions change, variation of teaching is of the essence of wisdom. In the time of the Prophet Adam, it seems, human beings lived together in one part of the world; one teaching, therefore, was enough for them. Possibly even up to Noah's time they continued to live in this way. According to the Bible, human tribes continued to live together in one part of the world up to Babylonian times. The Bible is not a book of history. But there is evidence which supports the Biblical account.

Among all nations of the world, even among savages inhabiting lonely islands, we find traces of the story of Noah's flood. It seems unlikely that the whole of the world was first engulfed in a universal deluge, and then knowledge of it spread in all parts of the world. It seems more likely that in one part of the world there was a deluge which resulted in the dispersion of the population in different directions. If it is not proved that the world was one up to Babylonian times, history lends support to the view that it was one up to Noah's time. After Noah's time the population dispersed into different countries. The influence of Noah's teaching began to decline, because means of communication were so poor. A teacher in one country could not communicate his message to other countries. It was but appropriate then that God should have sent a Prophet to each country, so that no country should be without His guidance. This made for division between religion and religion, because the human mind had not yet fully developed. As human intellect and understanding lacked the development to which they were to attain later, every country had a teaching sent to it appropriate to the level of development to which it had attained.

## **Islam Teaches Oneness of God and of Humanity**

But when the human race began to advance and more and more countries began to be inhabited, and distances between them began to be annihilated, and means of communication began to improve, the human mind began to appreciate the need of a universal teaching, covering all the different situations of man. Through mutual contact men came to have insight into the fundamental oneness of the human race and the Oneness of their Creator and Guide. Then in the desert of Arabia, God sent His final Message to mankind through the Holy Prophet of Islam. No wonder this Message begins by praising God, the Lord of the worlds. It speaks of God to Whom all manner of praise is due, Who sends His sustenance to all peoples and all countries, and in an equitable measure. He is not partial to any country or any people. Therefore, the Message which begins thus, inevitably ends by invoking the Lord of all mankind, their King and their God. The Prophet who brought this Message was a Second Adam. As in the time of the First Adam there was one revelation and one people, so in the time of this Second Adam the world again had one revelation and became one people. If, therefore, this world has been created by One God, and if God is equally interested in all peoples and all countries, it is imperative that ultimately these different peoples and different religious traditions should unite in one belief and one outlook. If the Quran had not come, the spiritual purpose for which mankind had been created would have been frustrated. If the world cannot be assembled around one spiritual centre, can we ever come to appreciate the Oneness of our Creator? A river has many tributaries but at last it becomes one broad stream and it is then that its might and beauty manifest themselves. The Messages which Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Zoroaster and other Prophets brought to different parts of the world are like tributaries which arise before a mighty river shapes its course. They were all good and wholesome. But it was necessary that they should flow at last into one river, and demonstrate the Oneness of God and promote the one ultimate purpose for which mankind had been created. If the Quran does not fulfil this purpose, where is the teaching which does? Not the Bible, because the Bible talks only of the God of Israel. Nor Zoroaster's, because Zoroaster conveys the light of God exclusively to the Iranian people. Nor the Vedas, because the Rishis prescribe the penalty of casting molten lead into the ears of Shudras—India's original inhabitants—who are bold enough to listen to the Vedic recitation. Nor does the Buddha fulfil this great purpose, because though the faith of the Buddha spread in China after his death, his own vision never travelled beyond the confines of India. Nor does the teaching of Jesus fulfil this purpose.

## **Jesus—Not a Universal Teacher**

Jesus says:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).

What Moses and the earlier Prophets have taught in this respect, we have described already. Christian missionaries have gone to all parts of the world, but Jesus himself had no such plan. The question is not what Christian believers are trying to do. The question is, what was the intention of Jesus himself? What was the design of God Who sent Jesus? This nobody can express better than Jesus himself and Jesus said clearly:

I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost (Matthew 18:11).

The teaching of Jesus, therefore, is only for Israel, not for others. It is said that Jesus exhorted his followers to go to other people:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19).

But to argue from this that Jesus had commanded his followers to take his Message to peoples other than Israel is not correct. It means only this that the followers of Jesus were commanded by him to preach his Message *to all the tribes of Israel* and not to all nations and peoples as such. Jesus speaks in clear terms:

Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

I am not sent but unto the lost sleep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs (Matthew 15:26).

Again we read:

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6).

Nobody should imagine that the idea here is that Christian preachers should first go to Israelite towns, then to others. For, to go to the lost sheep of Israel does not mean only to visit their towns, but to convert them to Christianity. The idea, therefore, is that until the Israelites have become Christian, no attention is to be paid to others. Jesus makes it quite clear that the task of preaching to Israel and converting them will not be completed until his Second Coming. Thus we read:

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come (Matthew 10:23).

From this it is clear that Matthew 28:19 requires Christian preachers to establish Christianity in the towns of Israel and not merely to visit those towns. It is made quite clear that this duty of preaching to the Israelites will not be over until the Second Coming. In preaching to others, therefore, while the Second Coming of Jesus had yet to take place, Christian preachers are acting against the teaching of Jesus.

The apostles also regard it as incorrect to preach the Gospel to non-Israelites. Thus we read:

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only (Acts 11:19).

Similarly, when the apostles heard that Peter in one place had preached the Gospel to non-Israelites, they were annoyed:

And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest into men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them (Acts 11:2-3).

Before the Holy Prophet of Islam, therefore, nobody addressed a Message to the whole of mankind; before the Quran, no Book addressed itself to the whole of humanity. It is the Holy Prophet who declared:

Say, O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah (7:159).

The revelation of the Quran, therefore, was meant to remove those differences and divisions which had come to pass between religion and religion and people and people, and which had first arisen out of the inevitable limitations of earlier teachings. If the Quran had not come, these divisions would have endured. The world would never have known that it had but One Creator, nor would it have realized that its creation had one large purpose in view. Differences between religions prior to Islam seem to require rather than to resist the coming of a Teaching which should unite them all.

The second question is, was not the human mind to undergo the same process of evolution as the human body had already undergone? And just as the human body had ultimately reached a certain stability of form, was not the mind (and soul) of man destined similarly to attain to a stability which was its ultimate end?

### **Meaning of Civilization and Culture**

In answer to this question we must remember that when we examine retrospectively the civilization and culture of different countries, we find that there have been many different periods through which those countries have passed. Some of these periods have been so advanced that between them and our time there seems to be little or no difference. If we disregard the mechanical achievements of the modern world, the achievements of some of the earlier periods of human history seem little different from the achievements of our own time. Both in civilization and culture such similarities exist. But if we go deep enough, we will find two important differences between earlier and modern periods.

Before we describe these two differences, we wish to make clear what we understand by civilization and by culture. According to us, civilization is a purely materialistic conception. When material progress takes place, there comes about a certain uniformity and a certain ease in human activities. This uniformity and ease constitute civilization. The output which results from human labour, and the means of transport needed to move this output from place to place, constitute an advance in civilization. Similarly, all the methods which may be invented for the transfer of goods from hand to hand, all the schemes which may be instituted to promote education, industry, scientific research, constitute progress in civilization. Whatever may be done to maintain internal security and defence against external aggression constitutes civilization. All these are factors which influence human activities. A country which is advanced in respect of these factors confers upon its inhabitants a pattern of daily life quite different from that of other countries. It is this difference which constitutes a difference of civilization. In a country not agriculturally advanced, the daily food of the inhabitants will be found to be quite different from the daily food of a country advanced in agriculture. An agriculturally advanced country encourages the consumption of many different kinds of foods. It will try to provide for a variety of needs as well as a variety of tastes. But an agriculturally backward country will not be able to provide any such variety. There will be no regard for individual differences in bodily health or refinement of taste. Whatever food the country produces as a whole will be provided, without any or many alternatives. Similarly, an industrially backward country will not be able to compare with an industrially

advanced country, in dress, housing and furnishing and in other accessories to comfortable living. The industrially backward country will not be able to provide cloth enough for its inhabitants. The question as to what variety of cut the cloth might be shaped into will not even arise. The people of that country will not even know what a coat is, let alone different kinds of coats appropriate for different occasions. Even a shirt will be a luxury for them. Shoes made of kidskin will be beyond their conception. To insist on footwear made of untanned hide will be something of a luxury. The very idea of footwear will be something uncommon. The inhabitants will usually go barefooted, or they will be quite content with a piece of untanned and unshaped leather tied on their feet. We refer to these matters only incidentally. We cannot go into all the details, but very little detail is needed to prove that such differences in the external pattern of our lives are the result of difference in the degree of advancement which different peoples attain in agriculture, industry, science and education. The differences are so large that those who are used to one kind of living will have no desire to associate with those used to another kind of living. It is these differences which, according to us, constitute differences of civilization and it is these differences on which the issues of peace and war to a very large extent depend. It is these differences which in the long run give rise to imperialistic designs and lust for power.

Culture is different from civilization. Culture, in our view, is related to civilization precisely as the soul of man is related to his body. Differences of civilization are ultimately differences of material advance; but differences of culture spring from differences of spiritual advance. The culture of a people may be said to consist of those ideas and ideals which grow under the influence of religious or ethical teachings. A religious teaching provides the foundations. Followers of that teaching then build on those foundations. In building on those foundations, the followers may travel far from the original teaching, but they can never completely lose touch with the foundations. A person who executes the plan of a building may deviate as much as he likes from the original plan, yet he cannot ignore the main parts of that plan. In the same way, religions and ideologies provide plans of living. What the votaries of those religions and ideologies build on the original plan develops into distinctive patterns of art and morality, so that the observer is bound to put followers of different religions into quite different classes. These differences are differences of culture. Differences of culture have become very important today. To advocate and to claim tolerance and breadth of view is very common today. In spite of this, a nominal Christian, otherwise an atheist, will associate far more easily with a bigoted Christian than he will with a nominal Muslim, otherwise an atheist, or with a bigoted Muslim. There is no doubt that in our time political interests also dominate the mutual relations of

peoples, and these political interests spring from differences of civilization. But cultural differences are not less important. A European Muslim is very cordial to an Asiatic Muslim; the cordiality he displays for a fellow Muslim, he never displays for a fellow European. A bigoted European Christian is cordial towards an atheist American. Is this due to strict religious bias? No. If religious bias were the only factor at work, then a Christian would find himself nearer to a Muslim's heart than to that of an atheist. The truth is that between Christian and Christian, even though one of them be an atheist, there are ties of culture, a Christian culture we may call it. A Christian atheist is no longer Christian in his religious beliefs but his emotions and actions are not free from the influence of Christian culture. Influences which transmit themselves through many generations are not easily obliterated. A Christian artist who may have become an atheist in thought will still display a Christian influence in his paintings and his music. In fact, but for such influence, his art would seem as out of place as thistles in a rose garden.

### **Different Periods of Civilization and Culture**

We now wish to point out that periods of civilization and culture come at times in isolation and at times in combination. They come separately at one time and simultaneously at another. Occasionally a nation attains to a great civilization but not to a great culture; occasionally to a great culture but not to a great civilization. Rome in its glory was the bearer of a great civilization; but it had no culture. Its Art and its Philosophy did not spring from any foundational ideology. Every individual was free to grow in his own way and to interpret life without reference to any large and basic principles. During the first few centuries of its existence, Christianity gave no civilization to the world but it gave culture of a very high order, a culture which sprang from a determinate outlook on life and which accordingly had its own characteristic features. Early Christians had their activities rooted in certain principles; their lives were defined by certain limits. These principles and limits were laid down for them by their religious teaching. On the other hand, the principles and limits within which the Roman mind worked were dictated by materialistic urges. In short, early Rome was an excellent example of a civilization and early Christianity a similar example of culture. Later, in Rome civilization and culture mingled together. When Rome became Christian, it had both a civilization and a culture, but its civilization was subordinate to its culture. At present, Europe possesses both a civilization and a culture, but owing to the dominance of materialistic conceptions, its culture has become subordinate to its civilization. When we study the history of the world, we find that times during which religion has succeeded in promoting a true philosophy of morals or a true culture, seem to have been very similar to our



own time. Similarly, times during which a materialistic outlook on life has produced a true civilization seem to have been very similar to our own. But two differences seem to be outstanding. Civilizations and cultures which arose before the advent of Islam were not universal in their appeal or conception. They were not derived from a universal principle. Religion and civilization were not like branches shooting out of the same root. If they ever seemed to be so, they lacked true unity. In the Jewish religion, no doubt, an effort has been made to combine civilization and culture. In the Old Testament, to a very large extent, social ideas and ideals have been combined with material conceptions, and both centre around religion. But this attempt of the Old Testament can be described as a first attempt only and not a final successful attempt. The same is true of the Hindu and the Zoroastrian religion. The thousand and one needs of human life seem to require an ideology and a system of thought which is elastic enough to serve as a guide for all occasions and all needs. Such an ideology the older religions do not provide. A wooden, inelastic teaching bearing on the needs of civilized society is also offered by them. But the innumerable needs of a wide human society cannot be met by an inelastic system of teaching. What distinguishes man from other animals is the very important fact that human beings, while they are so much alike, are at the same time so very different from one another. The animal world is distinguished by a dead uniformity. Buffalos, cows, lions, tigers, hawks and fishes, in short, animals and birds whether they live on land, in water or in the air, are all alike in their external appearance as well as in the structure of their brain. They seem to obey one uniform law. But man is different. Human individuals come into the world with the same kind of body. They have the same kind of appearance, and their limbs and sense organs also seem to be very similar. But in respect of their mind and in respect of what they think and feel, they are very different from one another. If we must have guidance for all these differently situated and differently constituted human individuals, it must be one, the rigidity of which is tempered by a due degree of flexibility.

### **Jewish and Christian Cultures**

As the world has advanced, it has made effort after effort to approach this ideal. Moses gave to Israel both a religion and a civilization. But his teaching proved too rigid to answer to that variety of urges of which human nature is capable. As soon as the people of Israel began to think along new channels and to entertain new ideals and objectives and to break new ground, the teaching which Moses had left for them began to fail. Moses did not succeed in making good citizens out of the new generations of Israel. True, they continued to attach themselves to this teaching but they became either rebels or hypocrites. Christianity, therefore, could not but proclaim that the Law was

a curse. Christianity was compelled to proclaim this, because it saw that the utterly rigid Law of Moses had made human beings either rebels or hypocrites. The message of Jesus, however, was delivered many centuries after Moses. The Mosaic Law was like a coat made to the size of a child, which no longer fitted adult Israel. Jesus saw the futility of grown-up and able-bodied adults trying to put on frocks made for little children. The spirit of Jesus rebelled against this. We should rather say that from the depth of Jesus' heart came the voice of God to say: "This people has gone far ahead of the time when they received their teaching from Moses. This teaching was enough for them as long as they remained in their earlier condition. But now they need a new teaching, a new coat to fit their increased size." But the new teaching which Jesus proposed for Israel or, to be exact, the teaching which Christians coming centuries after Jesus attributed to him, may be summed up in the phrase, "The Law is a Curse." There is no doubt that food which is above the digestive capacity of a person is a blight, not a blessing; but it would be wrong to conclude from this that the food as such is a blight and not a blessing. A small coat would seem strange on an able-bodied adult. So would a large coat on the body of a child. A small coat on the body of an adult and a large coat on the body of a child seem strange, but it cannot be said that the coat as such is funny. It seems to us, therefore, that to attribute to Jesus the teaching that "The Law is a curse" is cruel. All that Jesus must have said and meant was that the version of the Mosaic teaching current in the time of Jesus had become a curse for the people of that time. If he meant this, it was but truth. But the followers of Jesus have mutilated this piece of wisdom into something preposterous. In any case, whether Jesus said what we think he said or what Christians mistakenly think he said, there can be no doubt that in his time the human mind had advanced far from what it was in the time of Moses. It needed now a new guidance, a new ethics, a new civilization and a new culture. But while Israelite teachers had tied man to a narrowly conceived teaching, Christian teachers released man from all moral and religious obligations. Mosaic teaching restrained the mind of Israel from advancing beyond Moses' time, unless it was in the form of rebellion or hypocrisy. Christian teaching made man free from all obligations and induced the belief that the Law of God cannot raise man to any moral height. Man took over from God, as it were, the duty of planning for his salvation. The result was that the very religion which thought that the sacrifice of God was necessary for the salvation of man began to teach that for the moral advance of man the guidance of God was not necessary. We have a complete historic record only of the Israelite religion. Therefore we have taken our example from Israelite history. When a question relates to the end which a process of evolution seeks, we can answer it only by reference to historical records complete in all their

stages. The history of the Israelite religion is witness to the fact that the human mind kept on growing for a long time. It traversed stage after stage but did not seem to reach any final end. Similarly, the history of the world is witness to the fact that the human mind has advanced through many periods of social progress, but has still failed to reach the conception of a large human brotherhood. Both lines of evidence seem to point to the fact that the human mind, like the human body, has had to pass through many evolutionary stages. But until the advent of Islam, it did not reach any kind of finality in spiritual advance. In passing through different stages of social advance, it was not able to rise above the limitations of nation or race and the idea of human equality and human brotherhood did not take root. It passed through many different periods of culture, but did not reach any satisfactory Law, a Law for all mankind. The Mosaic teaching no doubt made an attempt to bring together social and cultural ideals, but after a time it began to fail. It began to fail because what it had offered was not the last word on the subject. Jesus no doubt tried to make a change, but the change did not prove enough, and was not able to stand the tide of rebellion in which the human mind had then become involved. All that survived of the teaching of Jesus is the saying attributed to Christianity that the Law is a curse. This saying, taken in the form in which it occurs, offends the good sense of every thinking person. Unless it is suitably interpreted, the saying is itself a curse because it only serves to turn man away from God and to free him from His guidance. Therefore it seems that the end which the evolution of the human mind was seeking had not yet come. The process and stages through which human civilization and human culture had passed pointed to the fact that civilization and culture are subject to the same law of evolution to which the human body was for long subject. It seems certain, therefore, that human civilization and culture were to attain to an ultimate perfection in the same way in which the human body, after a long process of evolution, had attained to an ultimate perfection of form; and this alone indicates the need of Islam in the presence of other religions, the need of a religion which should provide an end to the evolution of human culture, an end which is embodied in the teaching of the Quran.

### **A Pertinent Question**

The third question, an affirmative answer to which establishes the need of the Quran, is: Had the earlier Books come to suffer from defects which called for a new Book, which was the Quran?

In answer to this, we must remember that the first criterion by which we can measure the usefulness of a book is freedom from external interference. A revealed Book is superior to a manmade book because we can assume that the former will not lead us into error. God is sheer guidance. In a Book revealed

by Him, therefore, we may expect to find only light and truth, no darkness or error. If our conception of God does not imply such a trust in what He reveals, then that conception has no value. If communications from God also can err, then what ground have we for holding divine teaching superior to human teaching? Belief in a Book entails belief that that Book is free from error. It is possible, however, that a Book originally revealed by God may come to suffer from human interference. If the contents of a book have suffered additions and subtractions at human hands, then that book can no longer serve as a guide.

When we examine the earlier revealed books from this point of view, we find them entirely unsatisfying. The followers of the Old Testament regard it as a revealed book. Christians also describe it as a Book of God, and Muslims also think that it was a revelation. But it is one thing for a book to be revealed, and quite another for that book to retain intact its revealed text. No doubt, all the three peoples—Jews, Christians and Muslims, agree that God spoke to the Prophets of the Old Testament. But they no longer believe, and external and internal evidence no longer support the view that the record of the Old Testament, as we possess it today, constitutes the word of God as it was first revealed. From the history of Israel we learn that in the time of Nebuchadnezzar the books of Israel were burnt and destroyed. They were rewritten by the Prophet Ezra, and of Ezra we read in Jewish literature:

It was forgotten but Ezra restored it [(Suk. 20a) Jew. Enc. Vol. 5, p. 322].

And again:

Ezra re-established the text of Pentateuch, introducing therein the Assyrian or square characters [(Sanh. 21b) Jew. Enc. Vol. 5, p. 322].

Similarly we read:

He showed his doubts concerning the correctness of some words of the text by placing points over them. Should Elijah, said he, approve the text, the points will be disregarded; should he disapprove, the doubtful words will be removed from the text [(Ab. R. N. xxxiv) Jew. Enc. Vol. 5, p. 322].

From these quotations it is evident that the Torah, in whatever form it existed at the time whether the form which Ezra gave to it or the form which it had received from earlier times—was a very uncertain and unreliable book. Its general text could no longer be regarded as the word of God preserved in pristine purity. The "Book of Ezra" is no longer included in the Bible as we know it today. Yet it is no less reliable than any of the other books of the Bible. It is called the "Greek Book of Ezra". In olden times it was put before the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Later on Jerome, a notable Christian priest who was entrusted by the Pope with the task of editing the Bible, dropped it

out of the Bible on the ground that its Hebrew original was no longer available. This book is described by some as the Third Book of Ezra and by some as the Second Book. In any event, it seems that though this book was dropped out of the Bible, a great majority of Jews and Christians describe it as the "Book of Ezra". In verses 20-25 of the 14th chapter of this book we read:

Behold, Lord, I will go, as thou hast commanded me and reprove the people which are present: but they that shall be born afterward, who shall admonish them? Thus the world is set in darkness, and they that dwell therein are without light. For thy law is burnt, therefore, no man knoweth the things that are done of thee, or the works that shall begin. But if I have found grace before thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, which were written in thy law, that men may find thy path, and that they which will live in the latter days may live. And he answered me, saying, Go thy way, gather the people together, and say unto them that they seek thee not for forty days. But look thou prepare thee many box trees, and take with thee Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ecanus, and Asiel, these five which are ready to write swiftly; And come hither, and I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out, till the things be performed which thou shalt begin to write (Apocrypha; II ESDRAS, 14).

From this it appears that Ezra and the five scribes worked hard for forty days in seclusion and with the help of God composed 204 books. In verse 44 of this very chapter we read:

In forty days they wrote two hundred and four books (Apocrypha; II ESDRAS, 14).

From this we may conclude:

- (a) that in the time of the Prophet Ezra, who lived about 450 years before Jesus, the Torah and the books of the other Prophets had become mixed up;
- (b) that no reliable copy of these books was then in existence;
- (c) that Ezra wrote down the books again.

True, we are told that the books were revealed. But *revealed* only means that God helped in their composition. It does not mean that the text, word for word, was revealed by God. We learn from Jewish history that Ezra himself rejected parts of the text on the ground of unreliability, and that he left the final-decision about them to Elijah. The Torah as we know it today, therefore, is not the Torah which was revealed to Moses. It is the Torah which Ezra recorded from his memory, and about parts of which he himself was in doubt. We should even say that the present Torah is not even the one which Ezra wrote, for Ezra wrote 204 books, and we do not find 204 books in the Bible.

Of Ezra's memory, Christian scholars themselves express great doubts. Adam Clark, the well-known commentator of the Bible, says in his commentary (1891), under I Chronicles (7:6), that here Ezra mistakenly writes names of grandsons instead of sons and that to try to reconcile contradictions of this kind is useless (p. 168). In 7:6 we read: The sons of Benjamin; Bela and Becher, and Jediael, three; whereas in 8:1 we have: Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.

Jewish scholars take the view that Ezra did not quite know whether a given person was son or grandson of another person. When this is the view held by Jewish and Christian scholars of Ezra's memory, how can ordinary Jews and Christians and other ordinary people be satisfied about the spiritual value of a book with as little authority as the Bible?

Let us now pass on to the internal evidence on the point. The most important and the most decisive argument in this connection is provided by Deuteronomy (34:5-6):

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

These verses show clearly that they were composed and added hundreds of years after the time of Moses. It does not stand to reason that God ever addressed Moses, saying, "Nobody knows about your sepulchre unto this day." Can such words be addressed to a living human being? Can the words "unto this day" be used in a speech addressed to him?

Then in verse 8 we read:

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

This verse also shows that it cannot have been revealed to Moses but is a later addition. Then in verse 10 we read:

And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

This also does not seem to be a revelation of Moses but an invention made many hundreds of years after his death and entered in the Book of Moses. It is possible that it is the work of Ezra, but it may equally be the work of somebody else.

For further internal evidence on the point that the Torah, as we know it, was compiled after the time of Moses, and that it contains the writings of other persons, we should read Genesis 14:14.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

Compare this passage with Judges 18:27-29, in which it is said that this city which is called Dan in the Book of Genesis was first called Laish. About 80 years after Moses this city was conquered by Israel and renamed Dan. We read:

And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were as quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob. And they built a city and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.

The point is that a name which was proposed 80 years after Moses, could not possibly occur in the Book of Moses. It is quite clear, therefore, that the Book of Moses had additions made to it after his death and many writers entered in it their own thoughts and speculations.

This sort of editing is not confined to the Book of Moses. Other books of the Bible also suffer the same fate.

In Joshua 24:29 we read:

And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

Similarly in Job 42:17 it is written:

So Job died, being old and full of days.

From these quotations it is quite obvious that the Book of Joshua was not recorded by Joshua and the Book of Job was not recorded by Job. They were instead the compilations of persons who came later, and who compiled these books from what they heard from other people. It is possible also that the Prophets whose teachings are recorded in the Bible collected the word of God as it was received by them, but the records left by them could not endure the ravages of time, and when they became extinct the people who came after wrote them again from their memory, and in doing so entered many of their own thoughts and judgements into them. Is it any wonder that these books, which on historical as well as on their own internal evidence are maimed and mutilated, ceased to give satisfaction to their readers? Is it any wonder that therefore, God also withdrew His protection from them so that mankind began

to look and long for a book which should be free from and immune to all kinds of human interference? If even after these books had become contaminated, God had not revealed to the world a book which could be regarded as the very word of God, and protection of which from human interference could not be doubted, then we would have had to admit that God is not concerned to guide man and that He sows the seed of faith not in the soil which brings forth certainty and conviction but in the soil which brings forth uncertainty and doubt and that He wishes to confer upon belief not even the measure of certainty which disbelief enjoys. But can we entertain such a thought? Is it worthy of God? If it is not true, and it certainly is not true, that God is not concerned to guide man, then we have to look for the book which superseded the Bible and replaced this garbled and interpolated version of the word of God.

### **Contradictions in the Old Testament**

Further internal evidence bearing on the proposition that books of the Bible no longer reproduce the original revelation is provided by the contradictions which exist between different parts of its text.

(1) For example in Genesis 1:27 we read:

So God created man in his own image.

And further on in 2:17 we read:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

These two quotations are contradictory. If they are to be reconciled, we have to assume that even God is ignorant of the knowledge of good and evil. Because Adam being the image of God, if he was ignorant of the knowledge of good and evil, then God also will have to be assumed as devoid of the power of discriminating good from evil, the possession of which, in fact, constitutes the highest divine attribute. All other attributes are subordinate to it. If man was incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, he was incapable of anything worthy. What is worthy and valuable is that which is done intentionally and out of full consciousness. What is done unintentionally and unconsciously is not morally valuable. If man is incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, then he is not a moral being, being unable either to choose good or to avoid evil.

Is God also devoid of this moral attribute according to Jewish and Christian scholars? Does not God know what is good and what is evil? If He does not know this, then why does He send the Prophets, and what does He seek to teach through them? Is not God concerned to establish good and to destroy evil? If we forget for the moment that the very object for which man



has been created is that he should know good from evil, and if this knowledge is forbidden to him, then what need was there to create him? If man could not have knowledge of good and evil, how could he be said to have been made in the image and likeness of God? Without an insight into moral facts and moral distinctions, man could not reproduce any likeness of God. If man was the image of God, it is wrong to think that he was forbidden to go near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he was forbidden to go near the tree of knowledge of good and evil, then it is wrong to say that God created man in His own image.

(2) In Genesis 2:17 we read:

For in the day that thou eatest thereof (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) thou shalt surely die.

In Genesis 2:9 we read:

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

This verse can mean only one of two things: either that there was one tree which was capable of giving life as well as the knowledge of good and evil; or that there were two trees, one with life-giving powers and the other which gave the knowledge of good and evil. If, according to the verse, there was but one tree, then Genesis 2:17 is proved false, because verse 9 endows the tree with life-giving powers, not with death-like properties. If, according to Genesis, there were two trees and not one, then these two verses become contradictory. If Adam had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, death was not inevitable, because he could also have eaten of the life-giving tree. In fact, according to the Bible, when Adam ate of the tree of knowledge, he could also have eaten of the life-giving tree. If the consequence of eating the fruit of one tree was certain death, the consequence of eating the fruit of the other tree was eternal life. The situation in which Adam was placed is hard to understand; one tree offered him eternal life, another offered death.

We know from the Bible that Adam and his wife ate of the tree of life. We read in Genesis 3:2-3:

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

From these verses it appears that Adam and his wife ate the fruit of all trees except the tree of knowledge. If this account of the Bible is true, then

Adam and his wife certainly ate the fruit of the tree of life, and if they did eat of this tree of life, how could they die? Yet we read in Genesis 3:22:

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

This verse shows that Adam had eaten nothing of the tree of life, and it is impossible for us to determine which of the verses is true. Is it the one which says that Adam did not eat of the tree of life or the one in which Adam's wife is reported to have said that, except the tree of knowledge, they ate of all the trees in the garden? Nor is it possible for us to say whether eating of the tree of knowledge results in certain death or eating of the tree of life results in eternal life.

All these statements contradict one another, and the word of God cannot contain such contradictions. It is certain that these statements were added to the Bible by writers who entertained contradictory ideas. A book which contains such contradictory statements cannot be attributed to an ordinary rational human being, much less to God. But Moses was an honoured Prophet of God, and the Torah was certainly a revelation of God received by him. We have, therefore, to assume that these contradictions are later additions. Because of them, no blame attaches to God or to Moses. Only we must say that when God decided to replace the Bible by a Book of lasting value, He withheld His protection from the Bible and it was no longer safe from human interference and from the ravages of time.

(3) In Genesis 22:14 we read:

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

But in Exodus 6:2-3 we read:

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

The contradiction between these two passages is obvious. The passage from Exodus says that the name Jehovah was first revealed to Moses. Before his time no Prophet, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, had this name revealed to him. But the passage from Genesis says that this name was revealed even to Abraham and that he named a mount after it Jehovah-jireh.

(4) Similarly in Numbers 33:38 we have:

And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month.

But in Deuteronomy 10:6 we read;

And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera; there Aaron, died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son...

It is evident that one and the same person could not die in two different places; There can be no doubt that these two contradictory passages were entered in the Bible by two different scribes who have written down their own speculations in it and presented them as the word of God.

(5) In I Samuel 16:10-13 we read that David was the eighth son of Jesse:

Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said into Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

But in I Chronicles 2:13-15 we read that David was the 7th son of Jesse. Thus:

And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third, Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, David the seventh.

This contradiction also shows that historians of different persuasions have entered their views into the Bible, so that the Bible, as we know it today, cannot be regarded as a Book of God preserved in its original purity.

(6) In II Samuel 6:23 we read:

Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

But in II Samuel 21:8 we read:

...and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

The same book describes Michal as childless in one place and the mother of five sons in another.

(7) Similarly in II Chronicles 21:19-20 we read that king Jehoram ascended the throne at the age of 32, reigned for 8 years; remained dethroned

for two years: and then died of some fearful disease, i.e. he lived altogether for 42 years. But in the same book (22:1-2) we read:

And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem.

The first passage states quite clearly that Jehoram was 42 years of age at the time of his death. But the second passage asserts that the youngest son of Jehoram, Ahaziah, was also 42 when he ascended the throne on the death of his father. Were father and son of the same age and were the other sons of Jehoram, who were killed in battle by the Arabians, older than their father? Can any rational human being make these contradictory statements? The father dies at the age of 42 years and his youngest son of the same age becomes king after him. Such statements will not be found even in an ordinary book, let alone a Book revealed by God. There can be no doubt that these contradictions did not exist in the original revelation. They were not to be found in the utterances of the Prophets. Being contradictions, they cannot be attributed to a single author. We have to assume that many authors entered their thoughts into the Book of God, hoping to have them treated as revelations. One author believed that Jehoram was 42 years of age when he died; so he wrote accordingly. Another thought that Jehoram was 100 years of age at the time of his death, and at that time his youngest son was 42 years of age; so he wrote accordingly. These statements are contradictory. We have to admit that the writer who believed that Jehoram died at 42 did not believe his son Ahaziah to be also 42 at the time of his father's death, but possibly only 14 or 15. We have also to admit that the writer who believed Ahaziah to be 42 years of age at the time of his enthronement did not believe that his father at that time was also 42 years of age. The question is, what spiritual benefit can accrue from such a book? What faith or trust can such a book inspire in its readers? If the claim had been that the Torah is a collection of statements made by many hundreds of thousands of Jewish writers, even then the book would have possessed some value. But we find that, on the one hand, this book is offered as the very word of God, and that, on the other, it contains thousands of contradictions. This unwarranted claim on behalf of the Bible takes away even such value as it would have possessed, had no such claim been made on its behalf. Such a book cannot serve as a guide, and who can say that after such a book we did not need another?

### **Savage Teaching of the Old Testament**

Not only are there contradictions; we also find that occasionally the most savage teaching is attributed to the Bible, a teaching which cannot be attributed to a Beneficent and Merciful God.

(1) In Exodus 21:20-21 we read:

And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.

How severe is this teaching on slaves. A cruel man belabours his slave or bondwoman so much that the victim dies after one or two days. Yet the Bible does not award any punishment to this cruel man because slaves and bondwomen are their master's property. Could such a teaching endure for all time? Was it not deserving of supersession by a teaching which was to abolish the institution of slavery, which was to restrain the masters of human slaves from being cruel to them? This teaching was no doubt provided by Islam. Not only did Islam lay down laws for the abolition of slavery but also laid down the rule that slaves and bondwomen who failed to obtain their liberty were not to be treated harshly. On one occasion Abū Mas'ūd Anṣārī was beating a slave of his. From behind he heard a voice saying, "Abū Mas'ūd, the power which God has over you is much greater than the power which you have over this slave." Abū Mas'ūd turned back and saw the Holy Prophet approaching. His whip dropped out of his hand. He said, "O Prophet of God, I free this slave in the name of God". And the Prophet replied, "Had you not done so, the fire of Hell would have scorched your face" (*Muslim; Kitābul-Īmān*).

Similarly, another Companion of the Prophet says, "We were seven brothers and we had one bondwoman. The youngest of us gave her a slap on the face. The Holy Prophet on hearing of this ordered the release of this bondwoman, because he said, "a master who beats his slave is not fit to keep one" (*Bukhārī; Kitābul-'Itq*).

The Holy Prophet himself set a high example in this respect. On the occasion of his first marriage, his wife Khadījah made over to him all her property including all her slaves. The Prophet declared that he could not make a human being his slave and, saying this, he set at liberty all the slaves he had received as a present from his wife, and during the rest of his life he never kept a slave.

(2). In Leviticus 20:27 we read:

A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

Similarly in Exodus 22:18 we read:

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

How irrational is this teaching and how unjust if witchcraft here only means tricks performed by a class of professional entertainers. We should regard it as an innocent calling. In the busy and anxious lives that men often lead, fun and amusement provide welcome relief. It is then that these professional entertainers divert attention from serious pursuits to their own feats. To regard this innocent calling punishable with death is unjust. If magic and witchcraft call up the mystery man of fairy tales who transforms a man into a bull, a woman into a bird, then this teaching of the Bible is both stupid and savage. Such mystery men have never existed, and to accuse anybody of such impossible powers and then to order his death is extreme savagery.

(3). In Deuteronomy 7:2 we read:

And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.

About a vanquished enemy, how cruel is this teaching. To put to death all members of the enemy after their defeat, not to enter into any understanding with them and to refuse to show any mercy to them may be the conduct of cruel earthly kings. It cannot be attributed to a Beneficent and Merciful God.

Certainly such teaching must have been invented by unrelenting Jews who came after Moses and entered this teaching into the Bible and made it so foul.

### **Irrational Teaching of the Old Testament**

The Old Testament contains many irrational statements.

(1) In Leviticus 11:6 we read:

And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

Similarly, in Numbers 22:28 it is said that Balaam's ass talked to him.

In Genesis 46:27 we read that the number of the Israelites when they entered Egypt was threescore and ten but 215 years later, that is to say in the time of Moses, they had multiplied so much that the adult males alone numbered six hundred thousand. In Exodus 12:37 this is the claim made:

And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men beside children.

If, keeping in view the adult male population, we estimate the strength of the whole population, it turns out to be approximately twenty-five hundred

thousand. But it would be a great exaggeration and against all reasonable probability. In 215 years, a group of 70 souls could not grow into 2,500,000. Historical facts also are against this estimate. When Moses migrated from Egypt to Canaan and had to go into the wilderness for 40 years, what did this large population of 2,500,000 live on? Could they have found in the wilderness food and drink enough to keep them alive for 40 long years? True, as the Bible says, they had quails and honey-dew sent to them from heaven. But even according to the Bible this sustenance from heaven descended only occasionally. How then did this large population obtain their food when it did not descend from heaven?

We also learn from the Bible that the tribes obtained water each from one spring. But can we believe that 2,500,000 souls could obtain water enough for their needs from a few springs. The lands through which they passed contain no streams or rivulets. There are springs here and there, but a spring does not have any large dimensions. How can springs provide water for 2,500,000 souls? A book which contained such irrational statements could not satisfy human intellect. No doubt it was a Book from God. It was written by His Prophets. But it has lost its original character. It has become mutilated and has been changed out of all recognition. To regard a book which has suffered in this way as the very word of God, is to invite ridicule against God and religion. It was but necessary that after such a book we should have had another which should be free from human interference and immune to irrational interpolation. About the number of Israel the Quran comes to our rescue and points out the truth. It says:

Dost thou not know of those who went forth from their homes, and they were thousands, fearing death (2:244).

According to the Quran the people of Israel who fled from Egypt for fear of Pharaoh numbered a few thousand, and this seems but true because 2,500,000 Jews could not live in fear of small Palestinian tribes. In the best of days, Palestine did not have a population of more than two or three million. Even modern Palestine has a population between a million and a million and a half. Any proposed additions to this population are resented intensely by the Arabs. In ancient times transport of food was unknown. Large populations could not be supported by lands which had no produce of their own. The population of Palestine could not be more than a few thousand. In the chronicles of wars between Israelites and their enemies, their number did not amount to more than a few hundred or a few thousand. If Moses led 2,500,000 Israelites into Palestine, then quite apart from the days in the wilderness, even in normal times food enough for such large numbers could not be found. As for the opposition this large population confronted in Palestine, no war was

needed to put an end to it. Their large numbers were enough to drive out the original population.

(2) Similarly we read in Exodus 32:1-6.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden ear-rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf, and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

It is inconceivable, however, that a person who has heard the voice of God should begin to attribute Godly powers to others. One who sees an elephant cannot regard it as a rat. One who sees the sun cannot regard it as a candle. A man who sees another man cannot regard him as a worm. No more is it possible for a Prophet who has seen God and heard His voice to regard a calf of gold a God. Such misjudgement we do not expect even from an insane person, let alone a Prophet of God. The rank and file of Israel were pardonable. They had not seen God nor had they heard His voice. They had heard only Moses and Aaron speak to them and had come to believe in what they heard. So they accepted whatever Samiri taught them about the golden calf. It is impossible, however, to exonerate Aaron. He had seen God and had heard His voice. How could he be fooled by Samiri and come to regard as God a calf of gold made by human hands? Is it possible that the Omniscient God Who knows the inmost secrets of human hearts could have appointed for the reformation of Israel a man who was destined to prove as weak as Aaron did according to this account? Even ordinary kings are capable of selecting good generals and viceroys, and it redounds to their credit if they do so; yet no king can read the hearts of his generals. But according to the Bible, God knows all secrets and knows more than any man or any king. Yet He chose Aaron and entrusted to him the task of reforming the people and spoke to him and revealed Himself to him. But when Samiri presented his ungodly teaching



to Aaron, Aaron submitted himself to this teaching and on a suggestion by his people made a calf of gold, placed it on an eminence and declared it to be their god! Aaron forgot the true God for fear of his people, forgot what he had been charged with teaching, forgot his duty, forgot all his wisdom and, like an ignorant and superstitious man, began to bow his head before a lifeless object. Those who entered their speculations into the Bible must have possessed feeble minds. But the fact that they thought that these who came later would not be able to detect these interpolations defeats comprehension. It remains true, however, that after such serious interferences the Torah could not retain the status of a revealed Book. It needed another Book to bring out its absurdities and reassure the world that Aaron was not an ungodly or a superstitious person. That Book is the Quran. It exonerated Aaron of the charge of ungodliness. Instead of being ungodly himself, he restrained his people from this foul tendency. We read in the Quran:

And Aaron had said to them before: O my people, you have only been tried by means of it (the calf), and surely the Gracious God is your Lord; so follow me and obey my command (20:91).

From this it is evident that even before Moses returned from Mount Sinai, Aaron had warned the Israelites that the calf of gold had been set up to mislead them, that the Lord was the God Who had provided them with all the goods of life even before they were born. He had told them that the calf had been made before their very eyes. It was up to them, therefore, to follow Aaron, to obey him and to shun all forms of ungodliness.

It is up to all reasonable persons to consider whether the book revealed to Moses should continue to command our faith, when it begins to contradict established truths and to inculcate irrational beliefs. Should we not look for a Book which should tell us the truth about events of the time of Moses, even though it should come two thousand years after him?

(3) In Genesis 19:26 we read:

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

This seems like magic. Such an account is worthy of stories told to children about ghosts and fairies. They have no place in a Book of God. The account which the Quran has given of this incident steers clear of all superstition. It says:

She (Lot's wife) was of those who stayed behind (7:84).

She was not converted into a pillar of salt or any such thing. Only she refused to go with Lot and sacrificed love of God to love of relations.

In the Quran are narrated events belonging to the time of Moses. The present Torah narrates them in a wrong manner but the Quran, coming two

thousand years later, is able to correct these narratives. The errors which the Quran points out are readily acknowledged by reason.

### **Prophets Defamed by the Bible**

There have also crept into the Bible statements which are immoral in their import. It seems impossible to attribute actions reported in them either to God or to His Prophets,

(1) In Genesis 9:20-22 we read:

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

This account presents Noah in a most unbecoming manner. According to it Noah planted a vineyard, drank the wine, was undressed in his tent, his son Ham saw him naked and told his brothers about it. The account is wholly uncomplimentary to Noah, and yet of Noah we read in Genesis 6:9.

Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

It is inconceivable that such a man would commit the indecency of becoming undressed before his own children. Then it offends our moral judgement to think that the indecency should be committed by Noah but curses should be heaped upon Ham. Ham's fault, even according to the Biblical account, was to see his father undressed and yet he hardly could do otherwise. When he found his father drunken and naked, he could not possibly avoid seeing him as such and yet according to the Bible Noah said, "Cursed be Canaan" (Genesis 9:25).

Actually, Canaan is not to blame at all. Canaan was the son of Ham who committed the unavoidable indecency of seeing his naked father. Yet Noah had not a word to say in condemnation of Ham. He curses Canaan, who is not to blame at all. Is it because Ham was his son and Canaan his grandson? Such conduct offends our moral consciousness and cannot be attributed to a Prophet. To attribute it to a Prophet is a matter of shame for one who makes the attempt. We can well understand, however, that these things were not revealed to Moses by God, nor did Moses have them written down in his Book. Jewish scholars who describe the Prophets as thieves and robbers must have entered these things into the Book of Moses as a cover for their own sins. Their unholy interference with a Book of God made it necessary that God should reveal another Book which should be free from the absurdities and falsehoods which had crept into the old.

(2) In Genesis 19:30-36 we read:

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

No comment is necessary on this terrible narrative. It offends our sense both of the factual and the moral. But the present Torah does not hesitate to attribute this to a Prophet. From this we have to conclude that the Torah, as we know it today, is not the Torah revealed to Moses. It must have been composed later by Jewish scholars at a time when they had developed hatred for the sons, real or supposed, of Lot, Moab and Ammon. The faith of these Jewish scholars had become so weak, their hearts had become so hardened that to defame Moab and Ammon, they did not hesitate to attribute to the Prophet Lot's conduct which is reprehensible in the extreme and the attribution of which to any Prophet is entirely intolerable. Is the Christian and the Jewish world today prepared to hear such things attributed to the Prophets of God? If they are, it is only further evidence that we should have had a Book which corrected the depraved mentality of our day.

(3) In Deuteronomy 25:5-6 we read:

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

This teaching is ridiculous and depraved in the extreme. It allows a widow to submit to her husband's brother and bear children who should succeed in the name of the deceased. Can children produced by one person perpetuate the name of another? If children born to one's brother can

perpetuate one's name, what need is there for the brother to have marital relations with one's widow? If a brother's son can be treated as one's own son, there is no need to allow the brother to have immoral relations with one's wife. Far better would it have been for the Bible to declare that of the sons of the brother one may be attributed to the dead brother. This would have been reasonable enough. But it seems that as Jewish scholars invented a foul accusation against Lot, so God made them enter into the Torah an injunction the effects of which should recoil upon the Jewish scholars who had tried to defame Prophet Lot. God's vengeance was dire but well deserved. Jewish women were led by injunctions invented by Jewish scholars to do what Jewish doctors had attributed to Lot. These defects of the Old Testament clearly point to the need of a perfect Book which should be free from these defects, and that Book is the Quran.

### **The New Testament Examined**

We have seen that the Old Testament has suffered interpolations and changes in form as well as matter. It is possible no longer to use it as a guide. Let us turn now to an examination of the New Testament.

The books collected into the New Testament do not constitute the utterances of Jesus nor of his disciples. Jesus was a Jew and so were his disciples. If any of Jesus' utterances were to be found preserved in their originality, they could only be in the Hebrew language. So also with the utterances of his disciples. But no copy of the New Testament in ancient Hebrew exists in the world. The old copies are all in Greek. Christian writers try to cover this grave defect by saying that in the time of Jesus the language in general use was Greek. This is impossible for more reasons than one. Nations do not easily give up their language. It is for them as valuable an inheritance as any property or other possession. In Eastern Europe there are people who for three or four hundred years have lived under Russian rule, but their languages remain intact to this day. France has ruled over Morocco and Spain over Algiers for a long time. Yet the language of these subject peoples is still Arabic. Two thousand years have passed since the time of Jesus. Yet the Jews have not forgotten their language. Even today in parts of Europe and America, Jews speak Yiddish, a corrupt form of ancient Hebrew. If this long time spent amongst other peoples has not destroyed the Jewish language, could a brief association with the Romans destroy it? Let us remember that Roman rule in Palestine had begun only about 50 years before the advent of Jesus. This is not long enough for a people to forget their language. But there are other important considerations also to be kept in view:

(i) Nations which attain to any importance in history do not give up their language, and the Jews were a very important people indeed.

(ii) The religion of the Jews was recorded in Hebrew, and for this reason particularly, it was impossible for them to give up their language.

(iii) In the scale of civilization and refinement, the Jews did not regard themselves as inferior to the Romans, but rather superior, and this must have made them proud of their language and reluctant to give it up.

(iv) The Jews entertained hopes for the return of their political power. Nations which fear the future become pessimistic and therefore tend to lose pride in their language. But the Jews in the time of Jesus were awaiting the advent of their King who was to re-establish Jewish rule. Looking forward to such a future, they could not have been so negligent in protecting their language.

(v) Jewish authors of that time wrote in their own language or in some corrupt form of it. If their language had changed, we should have had books of the time written in a language other than Hebrew.

(vi) The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament are in Greek. But in the time of Jesus, the Roman Empire had not become divided into two halves. The centre of the Empire was still Rome. The Roman and Greek languages are very difficult. If Roman influence had at all penetrated Jewish life, it should have resulted in the assimilation of Latin (and not Greek) words into the Hebrew language. Yet the oldest manuscripts of the Gospels are all in Greek. This proves that the Gospels were written down at a time when the Roman Empire had become divided and its eastern possessions had become part of the Greek Empire, so that the Greek language had begun to exert its influence on Christianity and its literature.

(vii) Phrases such as the following which are preserved in the Gospels in their original form are all Hebrew phrases.

(1) "Hosanna" (Matthew 21:9);

(2) "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" (Matthew 27:46);

(3) "Rabbi" (John 3:2);

(4) "Talitha cumi" (Mark 5:41);

(viii) From The Acts (2:4-13) it appears that even after the crucifixion, Jews spoke Hebrew:

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Parthians and Medea and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and in strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

It is evident that at this time the language spoken in Palestine was Hebrew. Speaking any other language was extraordinary. Among the names mentioned is Rome, which means that the Roman language was not spoken in Palestine and whoever spoke it seemed a stranger. We are not concerned here with the merits of the narrative but we only wish to point out that this passage from the Acts proves conclusively that even after the crucifixion the language of the Jews was Hebrew. Those who knew other languages were exceptions. When some of the disciples spoke these other languages—among them Latin, some people thought they were drunk and talking nonsense. If the country as a whole used Roman or Greek, no such reaction was possible.

It is clear, therefore, that the language which Jesus and his disciples spoke was Hebrew, not Latin or Greek. So copies of the New Testament written down in Latin or Greek must have been written down long after the time of Jesus, at a time when Christianity had begun to penetrate into Roman territory and Roman imperialist power had become divided into the Italian and Greek parts. Books of this kind, composed 100 or 200 years after Jesus by unknown authors and attributed by them to Jesus and his disciples, can be of little use to any believer today. It was necessary, therefore, that we should have had another Book sent to us from Heaven, free from these defects and one which readers could regard with certainty as the very word of God.

### **Jesus' own Admission**

Jesus declares clearly that he had come not to destroy but to fulfil the older books. Thus in Matthew (5:17-18) we read:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

From this it is evident that the mission of Jesus was to restore Mosaic teaching, but the New Testament as we have it today teaches that the Mosaic teaching was abrogated completely by Jesus. It is quite clear, therefore, that the present New Testament is not what Jesus taught and preached. The teaching of Jesus must have been a reproduction of the teaching of Moses,

except for what the Scribes and Pharisees had themselves added to it. But the New Testament seeks to correct not only what the Scribes and Pharisees had invented but also what Moses and subsequent Prophets had taught in their time. This position is contradictory. One part of the New Testament teaches one thing, another part quite another. When a book contradicts itself, it cannot be the work of the same author, at any rate, of a sane author. The books of the New Testament are said to have been dictated by the disciples of Jesus, and we cannot say that the disciples were not sane. The great disciples of Prophets always possess a high degree of sanity. We must, therefore, conclude that the disciples did not dictate any such thing. They talked as they went about. Those who heard them passed on the substance of what they heard to others. When these others sat down to record what they had heard, they added many of their own thoughts. The result was the New Testament as we know it today, a bundle of contradictions.

### **Testimony of Christian Scholars**

After citing the internal evidence on the confused character of the New Testament, we cite the testimony of Christian scholars:

- (i) In the commentary of the Bible by Horn (1882) we have that the facts relating to the composition of the Gospels, which have reached us from the ancient historians of the Church, are so uncertain and so slender that no definite conclusion can be drawn from them. Even the best authorities seem to accept as gospel truth the speculations current in their time, and, out of sheer reverence, those who come after accept their authority. The narratives, partly false and partly true, pass from one writer to another and after a time begin to be treated as though they were above criticism (Vol. 4, Pt. 2. chap. 2).
- (ii) In the same volume we have that the first Gospel seems to have been recorded in the year 37 or 38 or 41 or 43 or 48 or 61-62 or 64 A.D.; the second at any time from 56 to 65 A.D., probably between 60 and 63; the third in 53 or 63 or 64; and the fourth in 68 or 69 or 70 or 97 or 98 A.D. The evidence with regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews, the second Epistle of Peter and the second and third Epistles of John, the Epistle of James and the Epistle of Jude, the Revelation of St. John the divine and the first Epistle of John, is so confused that we had better not speak of it. These have been attributed to the disciples without any sound reasons.
- (iii) Eusebius in his *History of the Church* writes that the first Epistle of Peter is genuine. His second Epistle has never been part of the Holy Book, but has been current in reading (Vol. 3, chap. 3).

(iv) In the same book (ch.25) we read that the Epistle of James and the Epistle of Jude and the second Epistle of Peter and the second and third Epistles of John have all been held in great doubt. It is not known whether these were composed by the writers of the Gospels or by others with their names.

(v) In the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (Vol. IV. p. 4980) we have:

The NT was written by Christians for Christians; it was moreover written in Greek for Greek-speaking communities, and the style of writing (with the exception, possibly, of the Apocalypse) was that of current literary composition. There has been no real break in the continuity of the Greek-speaking Church and we find accordingly that few real blunders of writing are met with in the leading types of the extant texts. This state of things has not prevented variations; but they are not for the most part accidental. An overwhelming majority of the 'various readings' of the MSS of the NT were from the very first intentional alterations. The NT in very early times had no canonical authority, and alterations and additions were actually made where they seemed improvements.

That is to say, the New Testament was written by Christians for Christians. Moreover, it was written in Greek for Greek-speaking peoples, and the style was in keeping with current taste. There has been no break in the continuity of the Greek-speaking Church. There are, therefore, no serious errors of transcription in the current versions, though we cannot say there are no contradictions. The contradictions, however, are not accidental, but deliberate. It seems that from the very beginning some authors entered these alterations into the text of the New Testament.

The truth seems to be that the New Testament in the beginning was not regarded seriously as a revealed book. Improvements were, therefore, made unhesitatingly wherever these seemed possible.

(vi) Again we read:

What is certain is that by the middle of the fourth century, Latin biblical MSS exhibited a most confusing variety of text, caused at least in part by revision from later Greek MSS as well as by modifications of the Latin phraseology. This confusion lasted until all the 'Old Latin' texts were supplanted by the revised version of Jerome (383-400 A.D.) which was undertaken at the request of Pope Damasus and ultimately became the Vulgate of the Western Church (*Enc. Bib.* p. 4993, Vol. IV).

What is absolutely certain, is, that in the middle of the fourth century, the Latin copy of the Bible was in a most confused state. The confusion was the



result of a comparison with the Greek copy and of a change in Latin terminology. These confusions remained until Jerome's revised version, prepared under orders of the Pope between 383 and 400 A.D., took the place of the old Latin version among Christians.

(vii) Similarly we have:

More important than these external matters are the variations which in course of time crept into the text itself. Many of these variations are mere slips of the eye, ear, memory, or judgement on the part of a copyist, who had no intention to do otherwise than follow what lay before him. But transcribers, and especially early transcribers, by no means aimed at that minute accuracy which is expected of a modern critical editor. Corrections were made in the interest of grammar or of style. Slight changes were adopted in order to remove difficulties, additions came in, especially from parallel narratives in the Gospels, citations from the Old Testament were made more exact or more complete. That all this was done in perfect good faith, and simply because no strict conception of the duty of a copyist existed, is especially clear from the almost entire absence of deliberate falsification of the text in the interests of doctrinal controversy. To detail all the sources of various readings would be out of place; it may suffice to mention, in addition to what has been already said, that glosses, or notes originally written on the margin, very often ended by being taken into the text, and that the custom of reading the Scriptures in public worship naturally brought in liturgical additions, such as the doxology of the Lord's Prayer; while the commencement of an ecclesiastical lesson torn from its proper context had often to be supplemented by a few explanatory words, which soon came to be regarded as part of the original (Enc. Brit. 12th edition, p. 646, Vol. III).

(viii) Again we have:

It appears from what we have already seen, that a considerable portion of the NT is made up of writings not directly apostolic (Enc. Brit. 12th edition, p. 643, Vol. III).

(ix) And again:

Yet, as a matter of fact, every book in the NT, with the exception of the four great Epistles of St. Paul, is at present more or less the subject of controversy, and interpolations are asserted even in these (Enc. Brit. 12th edition, p. 643, Vol. III).

(x) The New Testament is not free even today from interpolations and alterations. As examples we have the following:

(1) In John (5:2-6) we had:

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, said he unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

For hundreds of years we had this account reproduced in the Gospels. Nobody ever thought that it was unreliable. But when there began controversies between the Muslims and the Christians in the nineteenth century, verse 4 and part of v. 3 were deleted from the above passage in the Revised Version published in 1881, out of fear of Muslim criticism, and it was noted on the margin that many ancient authorities insert, wholly, or in part, the words deleted from the text. The question is, when this portion was found in many ancient authorities, why was the change made. Moreover, the very fact that a certain verse is found in certain copies and is missing in others is a proof of the fact that the original text has been tampered with. There can be only two alternatives. Either we will have to admit that the verse was not found in the original text. In that case, we will have to conclude that certain scribes took the liberty of introducing the words on their own account. Or we will have to admit that the verse did exist in the original text. In that case we will have to infer that certain scribes intentionally expunged the verse from the text. In both cases the text will be considered as having been tampered with.

(2) In I John 5:7-8 we had:

For there are three (that bear record in heaven, the Father, the word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one and there are three) that bear witness (in earth), the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The above passage formed part of the New Testament for centuries, but when the Christians entered into conflict with the Muslims and the latter began to hurl attacks at such passages, the former altered the text of their sacred Scriptures and the words within brackets were expunged from the Revised Version published in 1881. Now the question is; if the words so expunged did not form part of the original text and were introduced into the text by somebody, it means that in 1881 Christian scholars admitted that

Christian scriptures had been subject to interpolations. But if the old copies were correct and the present change has been made in the text for expediency's sake, it means that process of tampering with the Christian scriptures still continued.

(3) In Matthew (17:14-21) we have:

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then, Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Christian exponents seem to be convinced that after faith in Jesus, nothing further is required in the way of good works, to attain the pleasure and love of God. But from the passage of Matthew quoted above it appears that this great end cannot be achieved except by prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting, therefore, are important instruments for the assimilation of the grace of God. Because the disciples of Jesus did not make use of these instruments, they were unable, according to the Gospel narrative, to cast out a bad spirit, in spite of the fact that they had declared faith in Jesus. Muslim critics used this passage for a vital criticism. They said that mere faith in Jesus was not enough. Good works were also necessary and Jesus himself had stressed the importance of prayer and fasting, and had made use of them as instruments of spiritual advancement. If prayer and fasting were also necessary, then faith in Jesus could not be enough, and could not release man from the obligation to do good. This criticism was so vital that Christian exponents found themselves unable to give any reply. The only way of escape they found was in deleting the verse from the Gospel. Accordingly, in the Revised Version of the Gospel according to Matthew, we do not find this verse at all. The whole verse has been deleted and it has been proved that the Gospel text is still subject to human interference.

It is said that in Mark (9:29) the word 'prayer' is still retained; and that if the change had been made from any bad motive, the word 'prayer' should not

have been retained in Mark. But this plea does not hold good. Muslim criticism was not based on the word 'prayer', for prayer is still offered by Christians. The objection was based on the word 'fasting'. The verse that has been deleted showed that Jesus was in the habit of fasting and that he looked upon fasting as necessary for spiritual advancement, so the Law could not be regarded as a curse. In order to avoid this criticism, the whole verse was deleted from Matthew and the word 'fasting' was deleted from Mark. It is also possible that one party of the revisers thought it necessary to omit the whole verse, while another party thought it sufficient to omit only the word 'fasting'.

### **Contradictions in the New Testament**

Then there are contradictions in the Gospel accounts and such contradictions also prove that the Gospels do not constitute a revelation of God or that human interference has changed the original revelation out of all recognition. Any ordinary author possessing an ordinary measure of consistency will not allow contradictions in what he writes. How then can we tolerate contradictions in a Book of God. We give here some examples:

(i) With regard to the birth of Jesus we find from Matthew (1:1-22) and Luke (1:32-33) that the Messiah was to be one of ordinary human beings. Only, he was to be called son of God. From the Gospel of John (1:1), however, we find that the Messiah is the word which was ever with God and was, in fact, God, so that all have been made out of him.

(ii) From Matthew (3:13-17), Mark (1:9-12) and Luke (3:21, 22 and 4:1) it appears that Jesus received baptism from John and after receiving baptism from him, he left him at once or on the same day. But in the Gospel of John there is no mention of any baptism and the meeting between Jesus and John is said to have lasted two days.

(iii) From John (1:19-44) it appears that Jesus, after remaining with John and his disciples for a few days, went straight to Galilee. But from Matthew (4:1), Mark (1:12) and Luke (4:1), it appears that Jesus, after receiving baptism from John, went to the woods to have a trial of strength with Satan, and remained there for 40 days.

(iv) From John (1:35-51) it appears that, soon after meeting John, Jesus made two of John's disciples, one Andrew and the other un-named, his own disciples and on the way to Galilee he made Simon Peter and Nathanael his disciples. But from Matthew (4:12-22), Mark (1:12-20) and Luke (4:14-15; 5:1-11) it appears that, after meeting John and remaining for 40 day in the woods Jesus fasted, and on hearing of the imprisonment of John went to Galilee, and preached there in many places and for many days, and beside the lake at Galilee he admitted Simon Peter, Andrew, John and James as his disciples. That is to say, the place where, according to the Gospel of John,

these persons were admitted as his disciples by Jesus, is not the place where, according to the other Gospels, the admission of these disciples took place. The time also at which the admission took place according to John, is not the time given by the other Gospels. The other Gospels put the time about two months later.

(v) In John (4:3 and 43-45) we are given to understand that the native place of Jesus was Judaea, and that Jesus, believing that a Prophet is not honoured in his native place, left it for Galilee where he was much honoured. But, in contradiction to this, in Matthew (13:54-58), Luke (4:24) and Mark (6:4) we are told that the native place of Jesus was not Judaea but Galilee. Not honoured in Galilee, he said, no Prophet had been honoured in his own place.

(vi) In John (3:22-26 and 4:1-3) we are told that even before John was put in prison, Jesus had started preaching his message and baptizing people. But in Matthew (4:12-17) and Mark (1:14-16), we are told that Jesus started preaching after John's imprisonment.

(vii) According to Luke (3:23) Joseph, the husband of Mary, was the son of Heli; but according to Matthew (1:16) he was the son of Jacob.

(viii) According to Luke (3:31) Jesus descended from David through Nathan but Matthew (1:6) traces the ancestry of Jesus through Nathan's brother, Solomon the King.

(ix) In the genealogy given by Matthew we have from Joseph to Abraham 41 persons, but in the genealogy given by Luke we have 56 persons. Besides this, the names also in the two genealogies do not correspond.

(x) In Luke (24:50-51) we are told that Jesus was carried up into heaven at Bethany. But in The Acts (1:9-12) we read that the ascension took place on a mount called Olivet.

(xi) Luke (24:21-29, 36 and 51) says that on the day on which Jesus rose from the dead, or the night following, he ascended to the sky. But in The Acts (1:3) we read that Jesus ascended to the sky 40 days after he rose from the dead.

(xii) In Matthew (10:10) we read that Jesus told his disciples to provide "nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves", but Mark (6:8-9) says that Jesus told his disciples that they should take nothing for their journey save a staff only. Mark, however, admits that Jesus ordered the disciples to be shod with sandals. From this it appears that according to Matthew, Jesus forbade the wearing even of shoes and the carrying of staves but according to Mark the disciples had orders to carry staves and to wear shoes.

### **Superstitions in the Gospels**

A study of the New Testament shows that it is not free from the element of superstition.

(i) In Mark (1:12-13) we have:

And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

The incidents recorded here are nothing but delusions. The laws of God are against them. On this earth man lives in the company of men and not in that of animals or satans or angels.

It is inconceivable that the laws of God were different at that time. We do not have satans living visibly with men in this world, nor do we find angels doing visible service for men. To witness such things in dreams and visions is a different matter. Such experiences were had by persons in the past, and they can be had even today. But neither did we in the past nor do we at the present time have human beings living with animals such as wolves and lions. Nor do we have Satan coming to a human being and carrying him off with him, so that the man follows him and obeys him against his will, rebelling only occasionally. Nor do we have angels coming and doing such services as baking bread, cooking and fetching water. In fairy tales we do have such accounts, but what place can they have in a religious book? If the New Testament were a book like Kipling's *Jungle Book*, it would have been a different matter altogether. But the New Testament is a book for the religious guidance of man. What use can such a book have for fairy tales of this kind? Jesus was a virtuous and pious man. We cannot attribute such a fantastic thing to him. He was an honoured Prophet of God and was sent for the guidance of his people. It is impossible that he should have taught such things. It is impossible that his teaching should have upset the mental balance of his followers and driven them from the path of reason into the morass of superstition. We are constrained, therefore, to say that these superstitious elements were added to the Gospels at some later time. Jesus is not responsible for them, nor are his disciples. The responsibility for the introduction of these superstitions into the text of the Gospels lies on those Christians who came later, who were no longer spiritually sensitive, and who preferred popular applause to strict truth.

(ii) In Mark (5:1-14) we read:

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not

with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him. And always night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand); and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

This passage contains so many superstitious ideas that the reader is left wondering as to how they ever crept into the Gospel account. We are told, firstly, that a man had become so violently insane that he could not be held by the strongest chains. Medical science and ordinary human experience belie such a statement. There certainly can be chains strong enough to hold and restrain the most violent maniac. Did not people in those days know how to make chains strong enough to hold human beings?

Secondly, we are told in this passage that the maniac would cut himself with stones. Such a thing is most amazing. For years apparently, a man goes on cutting himself with stones and yet he does not die.

Thirdly, we are told that Jesus addressed this man, saying, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." Such a thing would only be said by persons entrapped in primitive and ignorant ways. It would not be said by a Prophet. If unclean spirits could ever enter human beings, why do we not see such phenomena today? Have we no means of tracing unclean spirits? True, medical science today identifies mental diseases as neurasthenia, hysteria, insanity and so on, but medical science attributes them to other factors, not to unclean spirits. The Gospel account, however, tells us that a rational, truthful person like Jesus thought that when a person goes mad, it is because an unclean spirit enters him. To attribute such a superstitious thought to a Prophet seems cruel to us. It is to project one's own superstitions on to a great teacher.

Jesus himself could never have said such a thing. Nor could his disciples. It is certainly a fabrication of later times.

But the superstitious thought is deepened further. We are told that Jesus asked the unclean spirit his name, and the spirit answered, "My name is Legion: for we are many." That is to say, it was not one spirit but an army of them.

We are told further that the spirits begged Jesus not to send them away out of the country. But Jesus did not agree, upon which the evil spirits begged him to send them into a herd of swine, that they might enter into them. To this Jesus readily agreed. The unclean spirits then went away and entered into the swine and the herd ran violently down a precipice into the sea. And in this way 2,000 of them were drowned.

How superstitious and stupid does this passage seem! We are told that the evil spirits wanted leave to quit the body of man and to enter into the swine. A further question is: This herd of swine must have been somebody's property and what right did Jesus have to destroy another man's property? If it is said that the son of God had right over all manner of property, then the question is, why call God the God of love? If God as Master of everything can destroy things in the possession of ordinary human beings, then what law or order do we have in the world? And what evidence do we have for the beneficence of God?

Besides this, there is another serious superstition taught in this passage. We are told that when the evil spirits entered into the swine, the swine ran over a steep into the sea. The question is, why this difference of behaviour? When the evil spirits entered a man, he did not hurl himself into the sea. But when they entered into a herd of 2,000 swine, they all ran into the sea and died. The whole passage is superstitious and stupid. Anybody who is convinced of the greatness and rationality of Jesus cannot attribute these things to him or to his disciples. He will have to conclude that such passages have been added to the New Testament account by later writers.

(iii) It appears from the New Testament account that Jesus used to restore the dead to life. Thus in John (11:43-44) we read:

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Similarly in Matthew (27:51-53) we have:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.



Can any rational being be persuaded to believe these accounts? If the dead could ever be restored to life, why not today? If it is said that this was the special prerogative of Jesus, our reply is that this is not true because Jesus himself said that if his followers had faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, they would be able to show Signs greater than those shown by him.

We have in John (14:12-14):

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

The question is, can Christians today restore the dead to life.

(iv) In Matthew (14:25-27) we have:

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

This also is rank superstition. What man can ever walk on water?

(v) In Luke (11:24-26) we have:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

What abject superstition is this? What possible meaning can such accounts have? Can they be attributed to a man like Jesus? To tell a lie is bad enough. To coin a superstition is about as bad. But to attribute lies and superstitions to God and His Prophets is cruel. The unwary and ignorant writers of the Gospels have been responsible for perpetrating this cruelty. In doing so, they have ruined the Gospels and made them unworthy as religious books.

### **Doubtful Ethics of the New Testament**

(i) In Mark (11:12-14) we have:

And on the morrow, when they were came from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing

but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

From this it appears that (a) Jesus who lived in a country where the fig tree was to be found in abundance, did not know when figs were in season; (b) he was, it seems, so devoid of good manners that instead of being sorry for his own mistake, he proceeded to curse a fruitless tree, saying, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter." We Muslims do not believe Jesus to be God. We regard him only as a Prophet of God. But even we cannot believe that he could have said what is here attributed to him. We cannot but be amazed at those who regard him as the son of God, and as the best exemplar of morals, and who yet tolerate these descriptions which attribute unmannerly conduct to him. They never stop to think whether such things could ever be said by Jesus and whether they were not wrongly attributed to him by others.

Christian apologists today tend to explain away this passage. They suggest that the curse applies not to the fig tree but to the Jewish nation and only means that Jews hereafter will not be able to bring forth any fruit. The explanation is lame. Those who are conversant with ordinary literary forms cannot be impressed by such explanations. If the fig tree was to be used as metaphor, was it necessary that Jesus should have walked up to one, at a time when he was suffering from hunger? According to the passage in Mark, Jesus saw the fig tree full of leaves, and he decided to go near it, hoping he would find some fruit. It was after he had seen it closely and found nothing but leaves (the time of figs had not yet come) that he cursed the tree. Jesus, in short, goes to the tree to satisfy his hunger. The tree has leaves on it and Jesus hopes to find some fruit. The narrator adds that the time of figs had not yet come. All this shows that this incident was not meant as a metaphor. The narrator makes it quite clear that Jesus went to the tree because he was hungry, and was hoping to find some fruit. But the time of fruit had not yet come. It is possible that this particular tree was late in yielding fruit, or that it suffered from some disease and failed to yield fruit. Jesus, however, became annoyed and cursed the tree. If all this is correctly reported, have we not reason to ask whether those who curse inanimate objects like trees, rivers, mountains or stones, can be regarded as rational beings? Did the writer who attributed this to Jesus think that generations of readers who would come after would swallow this caricature of a sane and decent person like Jesus. Christian devotees may be fooled by such a narrative, but we Muslims cannot attribute these things to Jesus, not because he was in any way different from the other Prophets, but, because we do not expect such things from even ordinary decent and well-behaved persons.

(ii) In Matthew (7:6) we have:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

What is here described as "holy" and as "pearls" is really the revelation and Signs of God. "Dogs" and "swine" in the verse mean the people who had refused to believe in Jesus. There is no doubt that the Signs of God are holier than the holiest things. They are more precious than pearls. But there is no doubt either that things which are holy and precious as pearls are meant just for those who are devoid of them. Signs of God have to be shown to those who are devoid of faith in Him. The Prophets do not bring faith only to those who already have it. This is apparent from history that Prophets have never appeared except in times of great disbelief. They have appeared only when the world is enwrapped in darkness, and their mission is to guide the world from darkness to light. Their message is addressed to those groping in the dark. It is for them that they come into the world. It does not seem possible that a beloved of God should describe as dogs and swine those whose only fault is that the light of faith has not yet dawned upon them. It is impossible that a Prophet should say that the Signs of God should not be narrated to disbelievers for fear lest they trample them under their feet. If a Prophet were to say such a thing, how will disbelievers ever come to believe? The attribution of such a saying to Jesus is cruel. It amounts to saying that the very people for whom he had come were described by him as dogs and swine and this for no fault of theirs, nor for any mischief which they had committed, but only because the truth had not yet become manifest to them. Contrast this with the example of the Holy Prophet of Islam. In the Quran (26:4) we read:

"Maybe thou wilt kill thyself by overexertion in thy work because they believe not."

The verse describes how anxious the Prophet was to take his Message to all disbelievers. If we contrast the Jesus of the Gospels with the Holy Prophet of Islam, we find a world of difference. One is prepared to work himself to death for the sake of those who will not believe; the other would turn away from them, calling them dogs and swine and ordering his disciples not to recite the Signs of God to them.

There is no doubt that the Holy Prophet of Islam transcends all the other Prophets in his moral example. But we cannot believe that Jesus was as devoid of good morals as the Gospels make him out to be. True, he had not reached the spiritual heights which the Holy Prophet of Islam had. Nevertheless, he was a Prophet of God and had been sent by Him to teach people morals and the ways of the spirit. His example must have distinguished

him from millions of other human beings, but woe to the writer who attributes such unmannerly conduct to him.

In this connection we cannot omit to mention the incident relating to the woman of Canaan mentioned in Matthew (15:21-26) and Mark (7:24-27). This woman approached Jesus in great humility. In accordance with the custom of her people, she fell at his feet and wanted only guidance from him. But Jesus, according to the Gospel writer, said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs."

With what longing and expectation this poor woman must have approached Jesus. And she went not to beg for bread or cloth or for any such material thing; all she wanted was spiritual guidance. She wanted from him just what Jesus had come to give. But the Gospel narratives say that Jesus sent this woman away. Not only this, he abused a woman to her face, called her dog and dishonoured her. Jesus, if the Gospel account is true, did not dishonour this woman from Canaan only. He dishonoured the entire fair sex, and proved by his own utterance that he had nothing to give to poor women. All his thoughts were concentrated on the well-being of the Jewish race. He would prefer having his feet anointed by a sinning Jewish woman (Luke 7:36-38) to saying a word of comfort to a non-Jewish woman. If Christians accept this part of the Gospel narrative as true, they are quite welcome. But we for our part cannot believe that his disciples could have said such a thing about him. These things, according to us, are fabrications of later writers. And they were made at a time when the real Jesus had disappeared from the world and an imaginary Jesus was being manufactured by ignorant writers.

(iii) In John (2:1-4) we have:

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, "They have no wine." Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

Similarly in Matthew (12:47-48) we have:

Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother and who are my brethren?

These passages from John and Matthew show that Jesus did not have much regard even for his mother, a relationship which is held in the highest respect and esteem by all decent persons. Will an ordinary Christian today address his mother saying, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Will any Christian today dismiss his mother contemptuously and yet be counted as

decent? Then why did the Gospel writers single out Jesus for such a ridiculous description? Respect for mothers is a common virtue even among primitive communities. It is a species of good manners which the worst of human beings display. But if the Gospel narrative is to be believed, this last teacher of Israel, this hero of the Mosaic tradition, who came to lead a people from darkness into light and to teach them good morals, was rude to his mother and behaved insolently towards her. According to Christian belief, Jesus was the son of God, not a human being. If Jesus was the son of God, why was he born in the lap of Mary. If he had accepted being born in Mary's lap, and had subjected her to a mother's travails for nine months, and had sucked at her breast for two years, and had for years burdened her with the duty of his upbringing, could he not have repaid a mother's debt by showing the courtesy and respect due to her? The truth seems to be that these are only apologies. Christians do not hold Jesus in half the reverence in which they hold the fabricated Gospels. The fabricated Gospels are their own creation and Jesus was a creation of God. They are not prepared to adopt the straight course of admitting that the Gospel accounts are mistaken. They would rather have Jesus defamed than reject the Gospel accounts. But rational and decent human beings who have pondered over the life of Jesus and tried to grasp his purifying example cannot but admit that the Gospels, as we find them today, are full of fabrications and errors. They contain elements which do not promote, but which tend instead to destroy, the spiritual cravings of man. With the Gospels in such a plight, it was necessary that God should have sent to the world a new revelation free from errors and capable of inculcating in man not only high morals, but also a high spiritual outlook. That revelation is the Quran.

### **Interpolations in the Vedas**

The third religion important in respect of numbers is Hinduism. In accordance with the teaching of the Quran, we hold the certain belief that the Hindu religion had its origin in divine revelation and, because the Hindus regard the Vedas as their religious books, we are constrained also to believe that the Vedas contain revelations received by Hindu Prophets. But the state in which the Vedas are to be found at the present time is most confusing. We do not even know the names of persons who received these revelations. Vedic *mantras* in the beginning mention some names, but these names, according to Hindu scholars themselves, are not the names of the recipients of the revelations, but of those who collected them. The historical value of the Vedas, therefore, is very significant.

The Vedic scholars hold the following opinions about the Vedas:

(1) Pandit Vedic Muni in his *Veda Sarvasva* writes:

In truth, the confusion to which this Atharva-Veda has been reduced is without parallel in the other Vedas. Even after Sayanacharya many *Suktas* have been added to it. A fine method of interpolation has been invented. In the first stage the interpolated passage is marked out from the text by the words *Atha* (beginning) and *Iti* (end.) When the readers get used to the change the words *Atha* and *Iti* are dropped out and the interpolated passage becomes part of the general text. Just as in the *Rig-Veda* collection the *Valkhilya Suktas* are being added, so at the end of the *Atharva-Veda* are being added the *Kuntapa Suktas*. If you ask, "From where have these *Suktas* from the fifth *Anu-vaka* to *Kuntapa* come?", you have no reply. Ignorance is so rampant that at the end the words, "Atharva-Veda Samhita Samapta" are thought to be a sufficient guarantee that all that has gone before constitutes the *Atharva* collection. Nobody stops to inquire who the collector and publisher are, and what capacity they have for the task (p. 97).

(2) Pandit Mahesh Chandra Prashad writes in his *Sanskrit Sahitya kā Itihās*:

*Vaja Saneyi Shukla Yajur-Veda Sambita* is a strange collection. In this the Vedas and Brahmanas are as separate parts. There are altogether 40 chapters, but most people are convinced that of these 18 only are genuine, the rest having been added later. Chapters 1 to 18 correspond to *Bhaga Taittiriya Sambita* and *Krishna Yajur-Veda* in prose and verse. Of these 18 chapters we have an explanation, word for word, in their Brahmanas. But in the case of the remaining chapters we have explanations only of a few mantras here and there. Katyayana regards chapters 26 to 35 as interpolations. Chapters 19 to 25 contain an account of sacrifices. They do not tally with the *Taittiriya Sambita*. Chapters 26 to 29 largely consist of mantras relating to the same sacrificial rites which have been mentioned in the earlier chapters, from which it appears that most certainly they have been added later (p. 160).

(3) Pandit Shanti Dev Shastri writes in *The Ganga*, (Feb. 1931):

In the first place there was no certain finding as to whether the Vedas are three or four. According to Mann Smirti and Shatapatha Brahmana, *Rig-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda* and *Sama-Veda* are the only Vedas and they make the number three. But according to Vaja Saneyi Upanishad, Brahmana Upanishad and Mundaka Upanishad the Vedas are four in number (p. 232).

(4) Pandit Hriday Narain writes in *The Ganga* (Jan. 1931):

In *Charana Vynba* and other writings of Shaunaka Rishi the account given of the exact number of the Vedic *mantras*, their words and letters

does not apply to the present editions of the Vedas, from which it appears that the Vedas have suffered many additions and subtractions.

(5) Pandit Shanti Dev Shastri writes in *The Ganga* (Feb. 1931):

When *Charana Vyūha* of Shaunaka Rishi was composed, the *Shakalya Sambhita* in the *Rig-Veda* collection had 153,826 words, 432,000 letters and 10,622 *mantras*. But today you do not find these numbers (p. 231).

(6) Dr. Tarapad Chaudhri writes in *The Ganga* (Jan. 1932):

Besides these, you have in the Vedas, words which quite obviously strike you as foreign to the general text. It seems that the text has been tampered with by the unconscious fault of those who dictated as well as of those who transcribed it (p. 74).

(7) Pandit Vedic Muni in his *Veda-Sarvasva* writes:

The time of the composition of Gopatha Brahmana is just the time when the advocates of sacrifices held the field. At that time the votaries of the *Rig-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, *Sama-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda* were engaged in a fierce controversy and busy in making interpolations on different excuses. The *mantras* of the *Rig-Veda* which they fancied they each entered into their own respective Vedas. Everybody thought himself above criticism and hated everybody else. Not only this. Differences which had crept into the different manuscripts had divided the votaries of the different Vedas among themselves. The votaries of *Vashkala Sambhita* had separated from the votaries of *Shakalya Sambhita*, the votaries of *Madhyandina Sambhita* from *Kanva Sambhita* and *Shaunaka Sambhita* from *Pippalada Sambhita*. Each regarded his own fancied text as the best and the purest and all the others as corrupt and fabricated. The many differences in the texts of the Vedas which we find today took their birth in these evil times (pp. 105-6).

(8) The same authority goes on to say:

Besides these, parts of *Brahmana Granthas* have also been added to the Vedas, which the discerning reader can detect at once. The *Atharva-Veda* is in the same plight. Our doctors of theology should ponder over the situation. That a religious book should be in such a sad state is very regrettable (op. cit. p. 10).

(9) Further on he writes:

It has already been pointed out that we have at present two versions of the *Atharva-Veda*. One is *Pippalada Sambhita*, the other *Shaunaka Sambhita*. Of the two the *Pippalada Sambhita* is the more reliable. But this has not been pointed out, nor has Sayanacharya written a commentary on it.

Printed copies of the *Shaunaka Samhita* are available in three different editions issued by three different presses. Of these, two give the bare text and the third Sayanacharya's commentary in addition to the text. One of the bare texts has been issued by the Vedic Press, Ajmer, the other by the Bombay Press, the Printer being Sewak Lal. All the three editions differ in both chapter and verse (op. cit. p. 109).

(10) The Arya Samaj scholar, Pandit Raghunundan Sharma, writes in his book *Sahitya Bhushana Vaidic Sampatti*:

As far as we know, no evidence has ever been provided as to where exactly interpolations have been made in the Vedas. Nor is it proved that the places where interpolations have been shown to exist were not known to Vedic scholars. Places where interpolations exist have been known for a long time (since the time of the Brahmana Granthas). They are not interpolations, but only annotations which, owing to the oversight of copyists and printers, have entered into the text and become apparently a part of it. *Valkhilya Suktas* in the *Rig-Veda* (altogether 11 chapters and 80 *mantras*), *Khil* or *Brahmana Bhaga* in the *Yajur-Veda* (several chapters), *Aranyaka* and *Mahanamni* (2 chapters and 65 *mantras*) in the *Sama-Veda* and *Kuntapa Sukta* (10 chapters and 150 *mantras*) in the *Atharva-Veda*—these are interpolations well known to all, and for which there is ample evidence. Besides these, there are passages in the *Yajur-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda* which have been interpolated and which can easily be identified as interpolations. In short, just as variations in the various versions are well known, and pure versions are nevertheless available, in the same way the interpolations in the Vedas are also well known...We find that the *Vaja Saneyi Samhita* (the current version of the *Yajur-Veda*) has 1900 *mantras* which number includes the *Shakvari mantras*, because we are told...that one hundred less than two thousand *mantras* are those of *Vaja Saneyi* and the number includes those of *Shakvari*. If it is *Vaja Saneyi Samhita*, it should include only *Vaja Saneyi mantras*. But we find that the current version of *Vaja Saneyi* contains 1975 *mantras*. From this it is evident that *Shakvari mantras* are certainly included in the number 1900. The remaining 75 have been added from somewhere outside (pp. 570-571).

These statements show clearly that the Vedas are not free from fabrications. The older as well as the more modern Vedic scholars, all seem to agree that the Vedas had had other *mantras* added to them. To say, as modern scholars tend to say, that the Vedic scholars have traced the interpolations and separated them from the genuine part of the text, is not of much avail. If Vedic scholars had become convinced that some specific *mantras* were fabrications,



why did they not drop them out of the text? The fact that even the fabricated *mantras* continue to be included in the text shows that Vedic scholars were not quite convinced of their spurious character. The Arya Samaj writer in the end admits that only 1900 *mantras* of the *Yajur-Veda* are original, the remaining 75 being later additions. Even about the 1900 *mantras* he admits that they include some of the *Shakvari mantras*. These statements, with the significant qualifications, show that nobody really knows the truth and that everybody is trying to speculate. But can speculations be made the foundation of spiritual aspirations?

The truth seems to be that the genuineness of *Atharva-Veda* has ever been in doubt and the *Yajur-Veda* and the *Rig-Veda* also are so similar in their composition that it is most likely that the two have freely borrowed from each other. When confusion is so rife, who can say what *mantra* is genuine revelation and what is not, what is a fabrication and what is not? A book open to so much doubt cannot serve as a guidance for man. It must be replaced by another book free from all confusion and immune to human interference, upon which man can rely and which he can regard as a revelation with the same certainty with which he can regard "the choir of heaven and the furniture of earth" and indeed his own existence. Only such a book can inspire man with confidence in his search after God. Such a book is the Quran.

### **Savage Teaching of the Vedas**

We quote some examples of the savage teaching of the Vedas:

(i) In *Atharva-Veda* (iv, 22:7) we have:

Consume, with lion aspect, all their hamlets, with tiger aspect, drive away thy foemen. Sole lord and leader and allied with Indra, seize, conqueror, thine enemies' possessions.

(ii) In *Sama-Veda* (Part II, ix, iii, 8) we have:

Blind, O my foemen, shall ye be even as headless serpents are: May Indra slay each best of you, when Agni's flame hath struck you down.

(iii) In *Sama-Veda* (11:1) we have:

O god Indra, may the Soma juice given by us make you happy and intoxicated. Grant to us wealth and power and our enemies defeat and disgrace.

(iv) In *Sama-Veda* we have:

Ye slay our Arya foes, O Lords of heroes, slay our Dasa foes; Ye drive all enemies away (Part II, ii, ii, 8).

"Trample him down beneath thy feet, him who watches for and aims at us " (Part II, iv, i, 16).

(v) In *Atharva-Veda* (XIX, 28:4-10) we have:

Cleave through, O Darbha, amulet, my foes, mine adversaries' heart.  
Rise thou and batter down their heads like growth that covereth the earth.  
Cleave thou my rivals, Darbha, cleave the men who fain would fight with me...Tear thou my rivals, Darbha...Hew thou my rivals, Darbha,...Cleave thou my rivals, Darbha...Pierce thou my rivals, Darbha...Pierce the men who hate me, Amulet.

(vi) In *Atharva-Veda* (XIX, 29:1-9) we have:

Split thou my rivals, Darbha...Crush thou my rivals, Darbha,...Burn thou, my rivals...Consume thou my rivals,...Slay thou my rivals, Darbha,...Slay all who wish me evil.

(vii) In *Yajur-Veda* (27:2) we have:

"Agni, be those uninjured who adore thee, thy priests be glorious and none beside them.

(viii) In *Yajur-Veda* (11:80) we have:

Agni, him who would seek to injure us, the man who looks on us with hate, turn thou to ashes.

Besides the Vedas, other Hindu books also contain the same sort of teaching. In the *Manu Smṛti*, admitted by all Hindu schools as a reliable Hindu scripture, we have:\*

(i) Whatever man of the three highest classes, having addicted himself to heretical books, shall treat with contempt those two roots of law, he must be driven as an atheist and a scorner of revelation from the company of the virtuous (II: 11).

Are the critics of the Vedas to be banished from the country?

(ii) A man of the lowest class, who shall insolently place himself on the same seat with one of the highest, shall either be banished with a mark on his hinder parts, or the king shall cause a gash to be made on his buttock (VIII: 281).

(iii) A Brahman may seize without hesitation, if he be distressed for a subsistence, the goods of his Sudra-slave; for as that slave can have no property, his master may take his goods (VIII: 417).

(iv) But a man of the servile class whether bought or unbought, he may compel to perform servile duty; because such a man was created by the Self-Existent for the purpose of serving Brahmins (VIII: 413).

(v) A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from a

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\* The quotations are from the translation by Sir William Jones, 1869.

state of servitude; for, of a state, which is natural to him, by whom can he be divested? (VIII: 414)

(vi) Should he (a Sudra), through pride, give instructions to priests concerning their duty, let the king order some hot oil to be dropped into his mouth and ear (VIII: 272).

From these passages from Manu it is obvious that according to the Hindu religion, the grace and beneficence of God are confined to a few chosen castes. For some human beings it is a sin to recite the Vedas or listen to their recitation, and if they break the rule and seek either to recite, listen to or memorize any part of the Vedas, dire punishment amounting even to death is the penalty they have to pay.

This sort of teaching shows conclusively that the Vedic Dharma was meant for a few people. It was not a universal message. Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas do not constitute the whole of humanity. For other sections of mankind what does Hindu teaching offer? Is there no guidance for them? Can the universal providence of God be reconciled to the idea of guiding one part of His creation and omitting the other, leading one part to Heaven and the other part to Hell? Such teaching is not only savage, it is repugnant and dishonourable to God. Our God is full of grace and universal beneficence. Every part of the world is under His providence. Those who live on the surface of the earth or those who live under it, or those who live in the air, all grow and fulfil their destinies under the universal sustenance of God. He has endowed all sections of mankind with the same powers, the same urges and the same emotions. The urges which raise men in the spiritual scale have been distributed equally over the whole of humanity. No people have been dealt with scantily, neither Europeans nor Americans, nor Japanese, nor any other Asiatics. Hindus are not superior to others in respect of spiritual aspirations or mental capacities. God could not have omitted large sections of His own creation from His guidance, and chosen only a sixth of the human race for it. The existence of such a teaching declares openly that the time of this teaching is over. We need now a Book which should address itself to the whole of humanity, which should collect Arab and non-Arab, Jew and Gentile, Brahman and non-Brahman in one fold, and inculcate a universal feeling, and teach us not to treat the humble and the downtrodden as worthy, but as even more deserving of our sympathy, compassion and care. It was this need of a new Book which the Quran came to fulfil.

### **Superstitions in the Vedas**

The Vedas are full of superstitions. Elements like fire are called gods. True, it is said that these are not gods but only names of the attributes of God.

But it is true also that the Vedas teach, as pious duties, practices like lighting fire and burning oil, ghee and other such articles in it (Rig-Veda II. 10:4), and no doubt is left that oil, ghee, etc., are food for Agni, the fire-god. If Agni is an attribute of God, what is the point in lighting fire and feeding it with expensive inflammables? The ceremonial must be a superstition even if Agni is only an attribute. If, on the other hand, Agni is regarded as God, and the ceremonial suggests that it is, then the whole thing, the ceremonial as well as the belief behind it, is nothing but rank superstition.

In the *Rig-Veda* (II, 11:11) we have:

Drink thou, O Hero Indra, drink the Soma; let the joy-giving juices make thee joyful.

Now, Indra is the name either of God or of His angel. If Indra is the name of God, it is a most primitive thought which prompts one to offer Soma juice to God. If, on the other hand, Indra is the name of an angel or a spirit, even then the offering of Soma juice is a mean superstition. For God is hidden, and His angels are spiritual beings. They need no drinks.

In the same place (11:15) we read:

Let those enjoy in whom thou art delighted. Indra, drink Soma for thy strength and gladness.

To think that Soma juice will bring power to God or His angels is ridiculous in the extreme.

It is not one or two verses which teach superstitions of this kind. Hundreds of such verses can be quoted. We have, in some of them, descriptions of gods crossing the skies, mounted on clouds or on chariots.

A large part of the Vedas consists of immoral suggestions. These pertain to matters of sex and are so brazen that we fear quotation would offend the reader's sense of decency. Sex impulses and sex organs are described with a detail which would be nauseating even in a book of medicine.

For these reasons, we can say that though there are parts of the Vedas which point to their origin in divine revelation, there are others which prove that they have suffered from human fabrication. Because of this, the Vedas can no longer be treated as a guide for human conduct. We need, instead, a Book free from all such defects. That Book is the Quran.

### **Contradictions in the Vedas**

Like the Bible, the Vedas contain interpolations made by different persons in different periods. No wonder there are many contradictions in their text, and here are some examples:

(i) The Vedas raise the question: Who made the sun? To this, quite different answers are proposed in different parts of the Vedas. In the *Rig-Veda* (IX, 96:5) we are told that the sun was made by the Soma god.

But in the *Rig-Veda* (VIII, 36:4) we are told the sun was made by the god Indra. The same book teaches one thing in one chapter and quite another in another chapter. It teaches in one chapter that the sun was made by the Soma god, and in another, that it was made by the god Indra. When we turn to the other Vedas the contradiction becomes more and more serious.

In the *Yajur-Veda* (31:12) we read that the sun was made by Brahma from his eye.

The *Atharva-Veda* further contradicts this. In it (XIX, 27:7) we find that all the gods joined together and made the sun.

This is different from, and contradicts, all the other accounts.

(ii) The Vedas teach that the sun at first was on the earth, it was then taken to the skies. This account may be ridiculous from the point of view of astronomical science; we are concerned only to point out that even this extraordinary statement is couched in very different terms in different parts of the Vedas.

In *Krishna Yajur-Veda Taittiriya Samhita* (7:1) we read that the sun was on the earth and gods then carried it on their backs to the heavens and placed it there.

In the *Rig-Veda* (X, 156:4) we read that the fire-god carried the sun and placed it in the sky.

But in the *Rig-Veda* itself in another place (VIII, 12:30) we read that god Indra alone carried the sun to heaven.

And in yet another place, (X, 62:3) it is stated that the sun was carried by the sons of Angira Rishi to heaven.

In the *Atharva-Veda* (XIII, 2:12) it is given that the sun was carried unaided by the Atri Rishi to heaven that it should create the months.

In *Shukla Yajur-Veda* (4:31) we have that it was the god Varuna who set the sun on the sky. The belief that the sun was carried from the earth to the heavens is ridiculous enough. But contradictory versions of it are even more ridiculous. The *Rig-Veda* alone gives three contradictory accounts. One is that the sun was taken by the fire-god from the earth to the heaven. A second is that it was the god Indra who did so. A third is that the sons of Angira Rishi performed this feat. The *Yajur-Veda* also gives contradictory versions. According to one, all this duty was performed unaided by the god Varuna. The *Atharva-Veda* gives quite a different account, declaring that it was the Rishi Atri who carried out the task.

(iii) Of the creation of heaven and earth, we have many accounts in the Vedas. But these accounts contradict one another as much as the accounts of ghosts and fairies do in children's tales.

In the *Sama-Veda*, Purva Archik (VI, 1:4), we have that the heaven and the earth were made by the Soma god.

But in the *Rig-Veda* (VIII, 26:4) we find that the heaven and the earth were made by the god Indra living on the Soma juice.

In another place in the *Rig-Veda* (II, 40:1) made by Soma and Pushan.

In the *Yajur-Veda* (13:4) it is written that the heaven and the earth were made by Brahma.

### **Number of Vedic Gods**

We believe, as we have said before, that the Vedas were originally a revelation of God and as such they taught nothing but the Unity and Oneness of God. But the Vedas, as we know them today, are not the Vedas which were revealed to the Rishis. The Vedas today are full of polytheistic descriptions, and these descriptions are to be found in such abundance that what little in the Vedas still bears on the Unity of God is relegated to the background. We give below a few examples:

In the *Yajur-Veda* (7:19) we are told that there are in all thirty-three gods, eleven on the earth, eleven in the sky, eleven in the waters.

In the *Rig-Veda* (III, 9:9) we are told that the total number of gods is 3,340. This, because, according to the *Rig-Veda*, 3,339 gods went to the fire-god and fed him with ghee. On his joining the big company, the total number of gods became 3,340. Accordingly, in the *Rig-Veda* (x, 52:6) the total number of gods is 3,340. This divergence in the number of gods present in different parts of the Vedas is amazing in the extreme; according to the *Yajur-Veda* 33 and according to the *Rig-Veda*, 3,340! To have departed from the conception of One God was dangerous enough. But such wide divergence in the number of gods proposed in different parts of the Vedas seems worse than dangerous. Contradictions of this kind compel us to conclude that though the original Vedas were most certainly revealed, the present Vedas no longer retain their original character, and are incapable of giving satisfaction to those who are in quest of spiritual solace. They need to be replaced by another Book which should be free from all immoral, contradictory, savage and superstitious teaching. That Book, we claim, is the Quran.

## **God's Promise to Abraham**

A fourth question, the answer to which should throw light on the question relating to the need of the Quran, is: Did earlier religions regard themselves as final? Or did they believe in a kind of spiritual progression which was due to culminate in a universal teaching for the guidance of mankind?

In answer to this, we must admit that a continuous narrative, in which the story of one Prophet is linked with that of another, is to be found only in the Bible. In reconstructing the stories of the Prophets, the help we derive from the Bible is invaluable. No other book revealed before the Quran can give us this help. To answer the question whether earlier teachings and earlier Prophets did or did not foretell the coming of a perfect Teaching and a perfect Prophet after them, we have to turn to the Bible.

When we do so, we find that God made many promises to the Patriarch Abraham. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees. From there he migrated with his father to Canaan. His father stopped on the way at Haran and died there. On his father's death, Abraham was commanded by God to leave Haran and go to Canaan and had the following revelation:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3).

And again (Genesis 13:15):

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And again (Genesis 16:10-12):

And the angel of the Lord said unto her (i.e. to Hagar) I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

And again (Genesis 17:9-11):

And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt

me and you.

And (Genesis 17:14):

And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Further on (Genesis 17:16), we are told that Abraham's wife Sarah also was promised a son.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Of the progeny of Sarah (through Isaac) we are told (Genesis 17:19):

and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Of Ishmael (Genesis 17:20-22) we read:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee (refers to Abraham's prayer in, Genesis 17:18—"O that Ishmael might live before thee): Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Again (Genesis 21:13):

And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

Again of Ishmael, God said to Hagar (Genesis 21:17-18):

For God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand for I will make him a great nation,

Again (Genesis 21:20-21):

And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

From these quotations it is obvious that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, Ishmael being the elder and Isaac the younger. God promised Abraham that He would multiply and bless his progeny. The promise applies to both Isaac and Ishmael. From the quotations it also appears that Ishmael lived in the wilderness of Paran, that the land of Canaan was given over to the sons of Abraham, and that the external sign of the covenant which God made



with Abraham was circumcision of all males. All these promises were fulfilled. The progeny of Isaac multiplied exceedingly. From among them arose the Prophets, Moses, David, Ezekiel, Daniel and Jesus. For 2,000 years they ruled over Canaan. Their hold on it was never really abolished, though for a short time it became weak. After the 7th century A.D., however, the sons of Isaac, and those who observed the letter of the Law of Moses had to withdraw from Canaan. The sons of Ishmael, instead, became its political as well as its spiritual leaders. The fact that the sons of Israel had to surrender the land of Canaan shows that they had become unworthy of the promise which God had made to them through Abraham. This promise was that Israel would remain in possession of this land until the Last Day, and the promise was true. The Last Day in the divine promise, therefore, cannot mean the day which is to mark the end of the world, but the day on which the Law of Moses was to be superseded by the promulgation of a new Law for the guidance of the world. In the language of divine revelation, the advent of a new Law is often described as the birth of a new heaven and a new earth. Just as a new heaven and a new earth cannot be created without a large-scale upheaval—usually associated with the Last Day—so the establishment of a new Law must entail a large-scale upheaval of the people who receive that Law. Therefore, when the prophecy said that the sons of Israel would retain their hold over Canaan until the Last Day, it meant that their hold would continue until the advent of a new Law-giving Prophet. In the utterances of David we have a hint of this meaning of the prophecy. The promise contained in Genesis that Israel would retain possession of Canaan until the Last Day is expressed differently. Thus in Psalms (37:29) we read:

The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

The promise of eternal possession is not for Israel as such but for the righteous. This utterance of David, in fact, was a clear warning that the days of Israel's dominance were numbered. The Prophet seemed to point out that the divine promise, after a time, was to be understood not in a racial but in a spiritual sense; that the sons of Ishmael were going to inherit the promises made to Abraham by inheriting the truth and a new covenant was going to be initiated through them. If our interpretation of the prophecy is not correct, then the question is, Why did God make the sons of Ishmael—and believers in the message of the Quran—dominant in Palestine? The prophecy was quite clear. The sons of Isaac were to hold Palestine until the Last Day. The question is, Why did they not? Why did God allow a transfer of political power from the sons of Isaac to the sons of Ishmael? If the transfer had lasted for a short time, it would have made no difference to the prophecy. The rise and fall in the fortunes of nations are a common phenomenon. But the transfer

of which we speak proved a permanent one. More than 1,300 years have passed, and Palestine is still in the possession of Muslims, the sons of Ishmael. European powers and the U.S.A. are trying hard to alter this, but so far, at any rate, they have not succeeded. If at all they succeed in their designs, the success is bound to be short-lived. Either the new Israelite settlers will become converted to Islam and regain possession of Palestine through a new covenant; or they will have to quit Palestine once again. Palestine is for those who keep the covenant which Abraham made with God. Christians, no doubt, claim to fulfil the covenant. But they forget that the covenant lays down an important external sign. That sign is circumcision of the male population. Only Ishmaelites have kept the sign both before and since the revelation of the Quran.

In short, the prophecy of Abraham promised blessings to both Isaac and Ishmael. According to this promise, the sons of Isaac were established over Canaan and the sons of Ishmael over Arabia. But when the Last Day arrived for the sons of Isaac, then, in terms of the prophecy of David, the promise was transferred from Israel to Ishmael. The claim of Israel was now only a racial claim. The claim of Ishmael was spiritual. On the basis of their racial claim, the sons of Ishmael held Mecca and the territory around (2:125-129). On the basis of their spiritual claim, they added Canaan to their possessions after the religious deterioration of Israel.

### **The Prophecy in Deuteronomy**

When Moses went to Mount Horeb under the command of God, he addressed the Israelites saying:

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken (Deuteronomy 18:15).

God spoke to Moses saying:

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die (Deuteronomy 18:18-20).

From these passages it is evident that Moses prophesied about a Law-giving Prophet who was to appear after him, and who was to be from among the brethren of Israel.

That he was to be a Lawgiver, and not an ordinary Prophet, is obvious from the words "like unto Moses". As Moses was a Lawgiver, the Prophet, who was to be like Moses, was also to be a Lawgiver. The Promised Prophet is described as one who "shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." From this also it appears that the Promised Prophet was to be a Law-giving Prophet. The promulgation of a new Law means the initiation of a new movement, a new nation. A Prophet who promulgates a new Law, therefore, is no ordinary teacher or reformer. He has to present a comprehensive teaching, incorporating fundamental principles as well as detailed rules. Without it a new nation cannot be raised. But a Prophet who does not bring a new Law has only to explain and to annotate an already existing Law. It is not necessary for him to present all that he receives from God to his people. It is possible that some of his revelations may be meant only for his personal edification, which, he is under no obligation to pass on to his people. The prophecy also lays down that the Promised Prophet will "speak in my name"; and those who will not listen to him, God will "require it" of them: that is, those who turn a deaf ear will incur punishment. We are also told that anyone who pretends to fulfil the prophecy will be put to death.

If we keep in view all the terms of the prophecy, we are bound to conclude that until at least the time of Jesus, no Prophet had appeared in the world who could be said to have answered to the description of the Promised Prophet. All the Prophets who appeared between Moses and Jesus, therefore, may be ignored, when we set out in search of the Prophet who could be said to have fulfilled this prophecy. They have left no following and no people who could espouse their claims; only Jesus remains who has a large following, and who is regarded by his followers as the last teacher sent by God into this world. But when we apply, one by one, the terms of the prophecy to Jesus, we find that not one of them applies to him:

*First*, the Promised Prophet was to be a Law-giving Prophet. Was Jesus a Lawgiver? Did he bring a new Law into the world to replace an old one? Jesus said clearly:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).

The followers of Jesus went so far as to declare:

And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,...(Galatians, 3:12-13).

Jesus laid no claim to giving a new Law, and his disciples regard the Law as a curse. How then can Jesus and his followers be said to fulfil the prophecy in Deuteronomy?

*Secondly*, the Promised Prophet was to be raised not from among Israel but from among their brethren, and Jesus was an Israelite.

Christian exponents, confronted with this fact, are wont to say that Jesus had no earthly father, so he can be said to be one of the brethren of Israel. But such a construction would be untenable. The prophecy speaks of brethren, which means they were to constitute a race or a people from among whom the Promised Prophet was to rise. Jesus stands alone, as son of God. If there were other sons of God, he might have answered to the description of the prophecy. But, apart from this, it is clearly laid down in the Bible that Christ was to be of the seed of David (Psalms, 132:11; Jeremiah, 23:5). Jesus may shed his Israelite origin because he had no earthly father: but he will not then remain a son of David, so that the prophecy of the Psalms relating to Christ will not apply to him.

*Thirdly*, the prophecy says, "I will put My words in his mouth." But the Gospels do not consist of words which God put in Jesus' mouth. They only tell us the story of Jesus and what he said in some of his public addresses and what his disciples said or did on different occasions.

*Fourthly*, the Promised One was to be a Prophet, while the Christian view is that Jesus was not a Prophet, but the son of God. How, then, can Jesus answer to the description of the prophecy?

*Fifthly*, we have in the prophecy: "Words which he shall speak in My name." Strange as it may seem, there is in the Gospels not a single example of words which Jesus may be said to have received from God with the command to pass them on to the people whom he taught.

*Sixthly*, we have in the prophecy, "He shall speak unto them all that I shall command," The Promised Prophet; according to this, was to give to the world a complete and Comprehensive teaching. But Jesus claimed no such mission for himself. He regarded himself as the forerunner of a greater teacher yet to come. Thus we have (John, 16:12-13):

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

From these verses it appears that the prophecy in Deuteronomy was not fulfilled in Jesus. We cannot but conclude, therefore, that both the Old and the New Testaments foretold the coming of a Prophet after Jesus who was to guide the world "unto all truth", and who was to establish the name of God on

earth for all time. Our claim is that the revelation of the Quran and the advent of the Holy Prophet mark the fulfilment of the prophecy in Deuteronomy. The following facts bear this out:

(i) The Holy Prophet Muḥammad was a descendant of Ishmael. The descendants of Ishmael were the brethren of the descendants of Isaac, the Israelites.

(ii) The Holy Prophet is the only one claiming to be a Prophet like Moses. We have in the Quran (73:16):

Verily We have sent to you a Messenger, who is a witness over you even as We sent a Messenger to Pharaoh.

The Quran definitely likens the Holy Prophet to Moses

(iii) The prophecy described the Promised One as a prophet. The Holy Prophet claimed to be a Prophet only. Jesus, we are told, on the other hand, did not claim to be a Prophet. We read in Mark (8:27-30):

He asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? and they answered, John the Baptist: but some say; Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

That is to say, Jesus denies being either John the Baptist, or Elias or one of the Prophets. But the prophecy in Deuteronomy speaks of the Promised One as a Prophet like Moses. The prophecy, therefore, applies to the Prophet of Islam, and not to Jesus.

(iv) The prophecy speaks of "words I will put in his mouth." The Gospels do not contain any such words. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet of Islam brought to the world the Quran which is, from beginning to end, only the word of God, which God put into his mouth. The Quran describes itself as the word of God (2:76).

(v) The prophecy said that the Promised One would speak all that he was commanded. We have quoted the Gospels to prove that Jesus did not pass on everything he received from God, and that there was to be another after him, who was to do so. The Holy Prophet of Islam fully answers to this description. We have in the Quran (5:68): "O Messenger! convey to the people what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord". The verse seems to say, "O Prophet, there is an ancient prophecy about you which said that when you come into the world you would give to it all the truths you received from your God. Therefore preach to the world whatever is revealed to you, whether it likes it or not." Similarly, the verse revealed on the completion of the revelation of the Quran says:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion (5:4).

That is to say, "Through the revelation of the Quran, faith has been made perfect and the gift of guidance made complete for you, and peace and tranquillity have been appointed for you as your religion." It was the Holy Prophet of Islam, therefore, who taught everything and kept back nothing. In the time of Jesus, people were not ready to receive and to believe in everything that was worthwhile. But in the time of the Holy Prophet of Islam, man had traversed all the stages of spiritual evolution and the time had come for all the truths to be revealed to the world.

(vi) The prophecy speaks of "words which he shall speak in my name". This part of the prophecy also was fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of Islam. He is the only one who spoke in the name of God, because every chapter of the revealed Book brought by him begins with the words: "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful." This great sign, duly incorporated in the Quran, also proves that the last stride in the spiritual advance of humanity, foretold by Moses, was registered with the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

(vii) The prophecy laid down the important criterion:

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die (Deuteronomy 18:20).

In this verse the world was taught how to distinguish the Promised One of the prophecy from those who should only pretend to fulfil the prophecy. It was necessary that a clear criterion should be laid down. The Promised One had to be charged with the important mission of initiating the last stage in the spiritual advance of man. If pretenders to this office should arise, the world would run great risks. To ward off these risks, God laid down the criterion that a pretender would incur divine punishment and meet with death and defeat. The Holy Prophet of Islam laid claim to this office very early in his career, and in the clearest terms. When he announced his claim, he was friendless and weak. The enemy was large in numbers and was strong, and left no stone unturned to bring to naught his message and his mission and spared no pains to put an end to his life. Mighty rulers also set themselves against him, but it was they, not the Prophet, who suffered discomfiture and disgrace. The Holy Prophet died full of success. When he died, the whole of Arabia had declared faith in him; and after his death, his first Successors in a few years spread Islam throughout the whole of the then known world.

Moses was a true Prophet. The prophecy in Deuteronomy was a revelation from God. But was the Holy Prophet bound to succeed in the way he did? And were his enemies, who thirsted for his blood, bound to fail in the

way they did? No, neither the Holy Prophet's success nor the failure of his enemies was an accident. On the other hand, it seems that the Quran had in view the terms of the prophecy in Deuteronomy when it declared before all Arabia and early in the career of the Holy Prophet:

And Allah will protect thee from men (5:68).

Similarly, addressing the enemies of the Prophet, the Quran declared:

He is the Knower of the unseen; and He reveals not His secrets to anyone, except him whom He chooses, namely a Messenger of His. And then He causes an escort of guarding angels to go before him and behind him (72:27-28).

That is to say, the Prophet, having been charged with an important mission, would not be left unprotected. Enemies would never be able to kill him.

These verses proved that the success which the Holy Prophet attained was not an accident of good fortune. He declared early, through revelations received by him from God and recorded to this day in the Quran, that God would protect him from the murderous attacks of his enemies. He warned the world that because he was not a pretender but the Prophet promised in the prophecy in Deuteronomy, he would not be killed.

In short, 1900 years before the advent of the Prophet of Islam, Moses declared that his own Law was, in the divine scheme, not the last Law; that the world was to have a fuller Law later on; and that, for this, God would send in the Latter Days another Messenger of His. This Messenger was to teach all truths; it was he who was to mark the last stage in the spiritual advance of man. The world had to wait for another Book and another Prophet. If, therefore, the Quran and the Holy Prophet have come after the Bible and after the Prophets Moses and Jesus, and if they claim to have come from God as guidance to man, their claim must be treated as just and true. It must be taken as the fulfilment of ancient prophecies. The revelation of the Quran was not a gratuitous revelation, a redundancy in the presence of those revelations. Indeed, if the Quran had not been revealed, promises made by God through His Messengers would have gone unfulfilled, and the world would have become afflicted with doubt and disbelief.

### **Fārān—Part of Arabia**

In Deuteronomy (33:2) we have:

And he said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

In this verse Moses is promised three manifestations of the glory of God. The first of these appeared from Sinai, to which a reference is made in Exodus (19:20):

And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

This manifestation of divine glory appeared in the time of Moses. The world witnessed the blessings which came with it. Time passed. The second manifestation promised in the prophecy was to take place from Seir. Seir is that part of the world round about which the miracles of Jesus took place. "Rising up from Seir ", therefore, points to the advent of Jesus. Christian exponents of the Gospels identify Seir with Sinai but this is a mistake. Seir is part of Palestine. The name has many corrupt forms. One of these serves as the name of a people who are descendants of the Prophet Jacob and are known as Banū Āsher. Another serves as a name for the north western part of Palestine. Seir, therefore, stands for the second manifestation of divine glory, to wit, the one especially associated with Palestine. To identify Seir with Sinai and to attribute both manifestations to Moses, is wrong also because Moses never crossed into Canaan. He died at a spot from where he could only see its borders. After Moses and before Jesus no manifestation of divine glory took place which could rank with that of Sinai. "Rising up from Seir ", therefore, means the advent of Jesus which took place right in Canaan, and through which, as it were, God showed His face for a second time. The third manifestation of divine glory was to take its rise from Paran, and Paran (Arabic Fārān) is the name of the hills which lie between Mecca and Medina. Arab geographers always called this territory Fārān. A halting place on the way from Mecca to Medina is called the Valley of Fāṭimah. When caravans pass through it, children from the neighbourhood meet them and sell them flowers. Asked where the flowers come from, the children answer "Bariyyat Fārān," (*Faṣlul-Khiṭāb*) that is, the wilderness of Fārān. Fārān, therefore, is part of Arabia, the Ḥijāz to be exact. According to the Old Testament, Ishmael lived in this part. Thus in Genesis (21:20-21) we have:

And God was with the lad (Ishmael); and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

### **The Quraish are Ishmael's Descendants**

The Biblical description of Paran is somewhat different from that of Arab geographers. According to the Bible, Paran is a territory adjacent to Canaan. But a territory made up of woods and hills must be a large one, sometimes



extending over hundreds and thousands of miles. It cannot be just a strip of land, situated within another territory or on its edge. The Biblical description can only mean that the woods and hills of Paran rise from somewhere near Canaan. It cannot mean that Paran is the southern periphery of Canaan. The Bible, however, admits that Abraham had a son called Ishmael and that he lived in Paran. The testimony of the sons of Ishmael who inhabited it, must be regarded as paramount. The Israelites should have little to say on the point. Their knowledge of history and geography was not good. They could not give an adequate account of the route they followed in their own journey from Egypt to Canaan. How could they pronounce on the geographical facts of other territories? Only one people today trace their descent from Ishmael and they are the Quraish. They live in Arabia, and Mecca is their centre. If the Quraish claim is a pretence, it is difficult to find a motive for it; the claim could not advance their racial status, for the Israelites still looked down upon them. Nothing could make a desert people trace their descent to Ishmael unless the descent was a fact.

Also, if the Arab claim is false, where did the descendants of Ishmael disappear? According to the Bible, Ishmael had twelve sons, and these twelve again, according to the Bible, were to multiply exceedingly.

Thus in Genesis (21:13) we have:

And also of the son of the bondwoman (i.e. Ishmael) will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

Again in Genesis (21:18) we have:

"Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."

Again in Genesis (17:20) God says to Abraham:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

That is to say, the descendants of Ishmael, were to multiply exceedingly and were to become a great nation. If the claim of the Arabs to be the descendants of Ishmael is false, equally must those Biblical prophecies be false. For there is not another nation in the world which claims descent from Ishmael. It is only when the claim of the Arabs is accepted, that the Biblical prophecies relating to Ishmael can be proved true; for they all apply to the Arabs.

The strongest historical evidence consists of stable national traditions. For hundreds of years, a people have regarded themselves as descendants of

Ishmael and no other people in the world so regard themselves. Better evidence than this there cannot be.

According to the Bible, the Ishmaelites lived in Paran, and Paran, according to Arab geographers, is the territory extending from Mecca to the northern border of Arabia. Paran, therefore is part of Arabia as certainly as the Quraish, are the descendants of Ishmael. The divine glory which was to rise from Paran was, therefore, to rise from Arabia.

That the Ishmaelites had settled in Arabia is proved by further evidence from the Bible. In Genesis (25:13-16) we have the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael as follows:

1. Nebajoth. 2. Kedar. 3. Adbeel. 4. Mibsam. 5. Mishma. 6. Dumah. 7. Massa. 8. Hadar. 9. Tema. 10. Jetur. 11. Naphish. 12. Kedemah.

In accordance with ancient custom, we should expect their descendants to be named after their respective ancestors. The descendants of Jacob, for instance, would be named after their ancestor. Countries also have been named after their people. In the light of these customs a survey of the population of Arabia reveals that the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael are found spread in different parts of Arabia. The descendants of Ishmael fill the entire length and breadth of the country.

The first son of Ishmael was Nebajoth. The territory peopled by his descendants, according to geographers is between 30 and 38 degrees North, and 36 to 38 degrees East. The Rev. Katripikari (Khuṭubāt-e-Aḥmadiyyah) admits this and says the descendants of Nebajoth occupied the territory between Palestine and Yanbū', the port for Medina.

Kedar was the second son. His descendants also constitute part of the Arab population. The literal meaning of Kedar is "of camels," which points to their Arabian habitation. They are to be found in the territory between the Ḥijāz and Medina. Ptolemy and Pliny, in the course of their description of the people of the Ḥijāz, speak of the tribes Kedars and Gedors (the latter seems to be a corrupt form of Kedar). There are Arabs today who claim descent from Kedar.

The third son was Adbeel. According to Josephus, the Adbeels also lived in this part of Arabia. The fourth was Mibsam. We cannot find any traces of this tribe in ordinary geography books. But it is possible that their name has become corrupted into some unrecognizable form. The fifth son was Mishma, and the Mishmas are to be found to this day in Arabia. The sixth was Dumah. A well-known spot in Arabia is still called Dumah, and Arab geographers have always traced this name to that of the sixth son of Ishmael. The seventh son was Massa, whose name is to be found intact in a Yemenite tribe. Their archaeological remains can also be identified. Katripikari mentions

this. The eighth son was Hadar after whom we have the famous town Ḥudaida in Yemen.

The ninth son was Tema. From Najd to the Ḥijāz the territory is called Tema and it is all peopled by the descendants of Tema. In fact they seem to have spread right up to the Persian Gulf.

The tenth son was Jetur (Arabic Yaṭūr). The Jeturs can also be traced in Arabia and are known as Jedurs. The sounds "j" and "y" often interchange, as do "t" and "d".

The eleventh son was Naphish, and Forster thinks that the authority of Josephus and the Old Testament supports the view that the descendants of Naphish lived in the wilds of Arabia.

The twelfth son was Kedemah. The habitation of the descendants of Kedemah is known to lie, according to the famous geographer, Mas'ūdī, in Yemen. The tribe known as Aṣḥābur-Rass and mentioned also in the Quran are descendants of Ishmael, and they were two tribes, one called Kedemah and the other Yamin. According to some authorities the second one was called Ra'wīl, not Yamin.

Historical and geographical evidence, therefore, shows that the descendants of Abraham have lived in Arabia. All of them held Mecca and the Ka'bah in great reverence, and from this it appears that Ishmael first settled in Mecca, and this is the part which, according to both Arab and Old Testament records, is called Paran (or Arabic Fārān). The testimony of the revelation of Isaiah (21:13-17) supports the same view:

The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it.

This prophetic passage is a picture of the Battle of Badr which took place about a year after the Holy Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina. In this battle the sons of Kedar, the people of Mecca and the territories around, suffered a grievous defeat at the hands of Muslims. Unable to withstand the fierceness of Muslim swordsmen and archers, the Meccans sustained a disgraceful defeat. Mark the words with which the passage begins: "The burden upon Arabia". Herein Tema and Kedar are respectively spoken of as an Arabian territory and an Arabian tribe. According to this text, revealed 714

years before Jesus to the Prophet Isaiah, the descendants of Ishmael lived in the Ḥijāz.

In short, from whatever side we may approach this question, there is abundant evidence that the Quraish were the descendants of Ishmael and that Paran of the Bible (Arabic Fārān) is the land in which they lived. The manifestation of divine glory that was due to take place from Paran was the advent of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, prophesied by Moses.

### **The Holy Prophet Mentioned in Habakkuk**

This advent was also prophesied by Habakkuk (3:3-7) 626 years before Jesus. Thus we have:

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hands and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

Here we have a mention of Tema and of a Holy One from Paran. From the prophecies of Moses and Habakkuk it is evident that the advent of Jesus was not to mark the last stage in the spiritual development of man. It was to be followed by the advent of another Prophet to mark the third manifestation of divine glory. This Prophet was to manifest both the Beauty and the Majesty of God and bring a fiery Law into the worlds not merely a message of forgiveness.

The Holy One to appear from the land of Tema and Mount Paran is the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, and his fiery Law is the Quran which has the virtue of consuming to ashes the stuff of which sins and satanic machinations are made. Moses truly said that the Promised One, rising from Paran, would be accompanied by 10,000 saints. As all the world knows, it was the Holy Prophet of Islam who rose from Paran and marched into Mecca with 10,000 followers. Could Jesus be said to have fulfilled this great prophecy, or David or Moses? Did any of them rise from Paran? Did any of them march to victory with 10,000 saintly followers? Jesus had only twelve disciples, one of whom sold him for a little money. Another cursed him for fear of being maltreated. Ten remained faithful but, according to the Gospel account, even they dispersed when Jesus was put on the cross. Had they stood by their Master's side, even then a following of ten could not have equalled a following of ten

thousand. And then the Biblical prophecy says clearly that the ten thousand would be with the Promised Prophet. But the Gospels tell us that the eleven disciples of Jesus who remained, abandoned him when he was put on the cross.

According to Habakkuk, one sign of the Promised One was to be the amount of praise showered upon him. Thus Habakkuk (3:3) says, "and the earth was full of his praise".

It does not seem to us a mere accident that the Holy Prophet of Islam was named Muḥammad (literally, the Praised One). When his enemies denounced him, they were worried by the contradiction entailed in denouncing the Praised One. So they changed his name from *Muḥammad* to *Mudhammad*, from the Praised One to the denounced one. When the Prophet's Companions got exasperated at the denunciations and abuse hurled at him he would say, "Hold your peace; they abuse not me but someone else called Mudhammad." Only a man with a name as beautiful as his personality and character could answer to the description which Habakkuk had given of the Promised One. No less significant is the tradition of devotional verse which has grown in Islam, and which has resulted in an important branch of the poetry written by Muslims of all countries.

Habakkuk also says:

Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet (3:5).

This sign of the Promised one was also fulfilled in the Prophet of Islam. True, the prophecy speaks of pestilence, that is, a disease in epidemic form. But it is large scale destruction and death which a pestilence brings which is here meant. Because the enemies of the Holy Prophet suffered large scale destruction and death in their encounters with him, he may be said to have fulfilled even this part of the prophecy.

Again it says:

He stood and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations (3:6).

This part of the prophecy, like the others, can apply neither to Moses nor to Jesus. Moses died while he was still fighting his enemies, while Jesus was put on the cross. The Prophet who beheld and drove asunder the nations was the Prophet of Islam. Truly did he say of himself; "My presence is awe-inspiring, and I have been helped not a little by it. People fear me from a distance of one month's journey." (*Bukhārī*).

Again:

The everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow (3:6).

This part of the prophecy also applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam. For his enemies were completely routed. Mountains and hills only mean powerful enemies.

Again we have in Habakkuk (3:7):

I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

This part of the prophecy clearly shows that the Promised Prophet was to belong to somewhere outside Syria. For it is the hordes in Cushan and Midian which are to be afflicted and frightened on the appearance of the armies of the Promised One. The description cannot apply to Moses or Jesus. It applies only to the Prophet of Islam. When a small army of his, in the time of his First Successor, Abū Bakr, advanced towards Palestine, notwithstanding the fact that Canaan was then under the Roman Kaiser, master of half the known world at the time, the superior forces of the Kaiser were crushed by the inferior Muslim forces. "The tents of Cushan were in affliction and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." The people of these lands found their salvation in laying down their arms before the servants of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad.

### **The Prophet's Advent Foretold by Solomon**

(a) In the Song of Solomon (5:10-16) we have:

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

This prophecy promises a Prophet who would be superior to others, and would possess a rank higher than others. We say this because the rapturous description in the Song of Solomon comes in reply to the question:

What is thy beloved more than another beloved? (5:9)

We are told that this beloved would stand out like a flag among ten thousand men. As a flag symbolizes an army, the description, therefore, applies to some great occasion on which this beloved would command a following of ten thousand.

We are also told:

his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh (5:13).

Now myrrh is a kind of gum, of bitter taste but sweet-smelling, and very useful, a germ-killer and a cicatrizer, used in disinfectant preparations, in treating wounds and making scents and perfumes.

We are also told that "he is altogether lovely" (mark the Hebrew *Mahamaddīm*). It means his person and character would be such as to compel love and admiration,

This prophecy clearly applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was he who headed 10,000 saints and marched victorious from the heights of Paran into the valley of Mecca, exactly as had been foretold by Moses. It was he whose teaching proved like myrrh for the world, bitter in taste but beautiful in its effects, contained principles and rules all of which were calculated to promote the well-being of man, and which yet tasted bitter to some nations. And it is he who is called (and is true to the description) Muḥammad.

Christian writers are wont to say that the beloved promised in this prophecy has been called *Mahamaddīm* not *Muḥammad*. But this objection does not go very far. The Old Testament name for God is *Elohīm*. In Hebrew it is common to show consideration and reverence by using a plural for a single person. We do the same in Urdu. Lecturing in Urdu, a lecturer might easily conclude his tribute to the Prophet by saying *Yeh hain hamāre Muḥammad*, meaning, this is our Muḥammad.

(b) In the Song of Solomon, we have another prophecy about the Holy Prophet of Islam. This is in 4:9-12. In these verses Solomon addresses his beloved as both sister and spouse (4:9; 4:10; 4:12). The simultaneous use of the two forms of address—sister and spouse—is not without significance. "Sister" indicates that the Promised Prophet would be an Ishmaelite, one of the brethren of the Israelites; and "spouse" indicates that the Message of the Promised Prophet will not be confined to his own people, as were the messages of all the Israelite Prophets. It would be open to other nations and peoples as well. We should not be misled by the feminine form of address used here. The passage is couched in poetical language, full of metaphors. The last line of the chapter uses the masculine form, which is contradictory, but significant. Thus we have:

Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits (4:16).

The prophecy (4:9-12), therefore, applies only to the Holy Prophet of Islam. Jesus was not one of the brethren of Israel, nor was his teaching addressed to any people other than Israel.

(c) We also have in the Song of Solomon (1:5-6):

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black.

From this description it appears that Solomon foretold the advent of a Prophet who would come from the south, and he (or his people) would be black of skin, as compared with the descendants of Isaac. It is well known that the people of Syria and Palestine have a fairer complexion than the people of Arabia. The Prophet of Islam was an Arab.

(d) In the same place another sign of the Promised One is given as follows:

My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept (1:6).

This is a description of the people to which the Promised One was to belong. The Arabs, at the advent of the Prophet of Islam, were an unambitious people. They accepted employment under Romans and Iranians, but of their own country they thought but little. The Holy Prophet came and Arabia rose from her slumber. The result was an Arab-led world movement embracing every conceivable side of human progress spiritual, intellectual, political. The Arabs became the keepers not only of their own vineyard, but of the vineyards of the whole world.

(e) The Song of Solomon also contains a warning for Israel: they are told not to meddle with the Promised Prophet. Thus in 2:7 we have:

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The theme is continued in the Song in 3:5 and in 8:4. These passages only mean that when the Promised Prophet appeared, Jews and Christians, two branches of Israel, would oppose and oppress him; but as the Prophet would be a God-appointed Prophet, they would not succeed, but would instead suffer an ignominious defeat. Solomon, accordingly, warned his people saying:

I charge you, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The Israelites, both Jews and Christians, were advised to do nothing to the Promised Prophet. When his influence spread to their land, they should accept him. It would not do to oppose him and to try to stem the tide of his influence. Opposition would spell the opponents' own destruction, for a people who meddle with a Prophet's mission become liable to divine punishment. The warning proved true. Jews and Christians became meddlesome and brought divine punishment upon themselves. If a people



remain passive and show no hostility to a Prophet, he adopts no violent steps against them but confines himself to teaching and preaching. Occasionally, a Prophet draws the sword, but only against those who first draw the sword against him. He makes war only upon those who first make war upon him and seek to put down by force and oppression the Message sent by God. The Holy Prophet's example illustrates this point. It was the risk entailed by thoughtless hostility to a true Message against which Solomon warned.

These prophecies cannot possibly apply to Jesus. Jesus did not appear from the south of Palestine. Nor was he one of the brethren of Israel. Nor did he have the means to resist and to destroy the opposition of Israel. The prophecies apply only to the Prophet of Islam. He is the beloved of the Song of Solomon. The Song is, in fact, a rapturous description of the Prophet.

### **Isaiah's Prophecies**

The Book of Isaiah also is full of prophecies about the Holy Prophet of Islam. They all point to the advent of another great Prophet, the harbinger of peace and contentment for the whole world. In accordance with the divine way, however, the prophecies contain a symbolic element which has to be interpreted before the meaning of the prophecies can be unravelled. The use in them of such names as *Jerusalem*, *Zion*, etc. is only symbolic. But Christian writers have been misled by these symbols into thinking that the prophecies relate to Jesus. Names *qua* names do not constitute any part of the prophecies. If the general content of the prophecies does not apply to Jesus, the names *Jerusalem* or *Israel* or *Zion* will not justify the application. True, the names also have a meaning, but a meaning which fits into the main content of the prophecies. As such the names *Jerusalem* and *Israel* will only mean "My holy places" or "My select people", not Jerusalem or Israel per se.

(a) The first prophecy we wish to quote from Isaiah is contained in 4:1-3. It is as follows:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.

Once it is agreed that Zion and Jerusalem in this prophecy are but symbols, the entire content of the prophecy is seen to apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam and to no one else. The prophecy says that the Promised

Prophet will bring with him wealth and splendour, that he will have treasures of the earth laid at his feet, that his people will be called holy and that polygamous marriages will be the rule at the time. Do these signs apply to Jesus and his disciples? Did they bring with them a period of wealth and splendour? Were the treasures of the earth laid at their feet? Was polygamy in demand by their society? No. The signs apply only to the Holy Prophet of Islam, his followers and his time. Jesus is supposed to have disapproved of polygamous marriages. But the Holy Prophet of Islam sanctioned and even commanded these under certain conditions. It was in his time that wars had to be fought in defence of religion and the youth of the nation had to lay down their lives. The number of widows increased and young women had difficulty in finding husbands. The Holy Prophet, accordingly, ordered polygamous marriages to prevent immorality and to make up for lost man-power.

(b) In Isaiah (5:26-30) we have:

And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: None shall be weary nor stumble among them; nor shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

A time was to come, according to this prophecy, when somewhere outside Palestine, a man would raise a flag. This man would call the nations of the world, who would swiftly answer his call and gather around him. Those who responded to him would shun sloth and indolence and make great sacrifices for their cause. They would take part in wars and their horses' hoofs would emit fire like flint. Their attacks on their enemy would resemble a whirlwind. They would completely overpower their enemy whom no one would be able to save. And why should they do all this? Because they would see that the world was full of darkness and a big change was called for.

This prophecy applies in its entirety to the Holy Prophet of Islam. There is a reference to it in the Quran also. In accordance with it, the Holy Prophet appeared away from Palestine in Mecca, and raised his flag in Medina; it was he who announced to the world:

Say, 'O mankind, truly I am a Messenger to you all' (7:159).

It was his voice to which men and women from the ends of the earth responded with great alacrity. In Jesus' life, not one convert came from outside Israel. All his disciples came from within a radius of 40 to 50 miles. But believers in the Prophet of Islam came from Yemen and Najd and Iran, and among them were idol-worshippers and Jews and Christians. They made such great sacrifices at the Prophet's call and exerted themselves for it so ungrudgingly that the worst enemies of Islam feel constrained to pay a tribute to their spirit of devotion and sacrifice. God Himself pays a tribute to them in the Quran thus:

Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him (9:100).

There are some of them, who have fulfilled their vow, and some who still wait (33:24).

The Prophet's followers had to take part in wars and to make use of bows and arrows. Their horses' hoofs were like flint and their wheels like the whirlwind. To this also there is a clear reference in the Quran:

By the panting chargers of the warriors, striking sparks of fire, making raids at dawn, and raising clouds of dust therewith, and penetrating thereby into the centre of the enemy forces (100:2-6).

This is a description of the warriors of early Islam, and how truly does it correspond to the prophecy of Isaiah.

We have in one part of the prophecy:

and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof (Isaiah 5:30).

The Quran refers to this in 30:41 thus:

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea." That is, both human wisdom and divine teaching have become dark and both point to the need of a new teacher, bearer of a new Message from God;

Also in 65:11-12 we have:

Allah has indeed sent down to you an admonition—a Messenger who recites unto you the clear Signs of Allah, that he may bring those who believe and do good deeds out of darkness into light.

(c) In Isaiah (8:13-17) we have:

Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be

taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

The prophecy clearly foretells the appearance of a Holy One whose coming will prove a trial for both Houses of Israel, a snare and a gin for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who will be defeated and disgraced if they choose to oppose him. His advent will mark the supersession of the Mosaic Law and God will turn away His face from the House of Jacob.

Christian writers are silent on this point. Maybe they take the two Houses of Israel to mean the two factions, one of which supported and the other opposed the son of Solomon and set up a rival rule. But this will not do, because the prophecy speaks of a holy man and of events which will take place in his time. This holy man can either be Jesus or someone coming after Jesus, because there has been no outstanding religious personality between Isaiah and Jesus who may have confronted Israel with a crucial message. But did Jesus confront Israel with any such message? And did Israel suffer defeat and disgrace on opposing this message? And did Jesus seal the Law for his disciples and announce its supersession by another Law? As for this, Jesus declaration is quite clear. He said:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).

Jesus settled the point not for his own time only but also for the future. He said significantly:

Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days (Mark 2:19-20).

From these declarations it is obvious that, according to Jesus, even after his death, the Mosaic Law was to remain binding upon his disciples. Were this not so, he could have said that the days of fasting were over. Instead of this, he not only fasted himself, but he also prophesied that his disciples would begin to fast after him. Scaling the Law, therefore, does not mean abolition of the Law as such or repudiation of the very idea of determinate religious duties. It means that in the time of the Promised Holy Man, the Mosaic Law would become superseded and a new Law would become established in its place. If this interpretation of ours is not true, why were we told that God would turn away His face from the House of Jacob? Did not Jesus belong to

the House of Jacob? If he did not so belong, he could not be a descendant of David. And if he was not a descendant of David, he could not be the Christ of the prophecy. For Christ was to be a descendant of David.

(d) In Isaiah (9:6-7) we have:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The prophecy promises the advent of a king who will have five names or titles: (1) Wonderful, (2) Counsellor, (3) The mighty God, (4) The everlasting Father, and (5) The Prince of Peace. The prosperity and peace in his empire will know no bounds; he will sit on the throne of David forever and perpetuate its good name by judgement and justice.

Annotators of the Gospels say in their headnotes to this chapter that this prophecy relates at the birth of Jesus. But of the signs mentioned in this prophecy, not one applies to Jesus. Did he for instance, ever become king? Were the names enumerated in the prophecy—Wonderful, Counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, ever applied to him? Wonderful, he might have been called, because of his peculiar birth. But the description does not seem to have been proposed. His deniers regarded his birth as illegitimate, so they could not describe him as Wonderful. His supporters, on the other hand, were in doubt about his ancestry. According to some he was a son of David. We have:

If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth (Matthew 27:42, 44).

Jesus gave no exhibition of his "might", nor was he ever described as "mighty" by anybody. Both friend and foe denied this of him. Were this not the case, his disciples would not have deserted him and fled. Says Matthew (26:56):

"Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

Does a mighty one meet with such a fate?

The fourth name is everlasting Father; and this also does not apply to Jesus. For, as we have shown already, he foretold another who would come after him.

The fifth name is Prince of Peace and even this cannot apply to Jesus. He never became king, so he never could bring peace to the world. Instead, he remained oppressed by the Jews and was ultimately put on the cross by them.

The prophecy lays down as a sign, "Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end". Jesus never attained to any government and, therefore, never could witness its increase.

Another sign is, "Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever," and even this does not apply to Jesus.

These signs apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was he who had to shoulder the responsibilities of State and who, quite against his will, found himself a king. It is an irony of fate that Jesus, who never became king, constantly dreamed of being one. (Matthew, 21:4-5 and 27:11; Luke, 23:1-3) The Holy Prophet was king; yet he hated being one, and constantly warned his followers against imitating the ways of Kaiser and Chosroes.

One name of the Promised One is Wonderful. Jesus admits that the bearer of this name was to come after him. We have this admission in the parable of the Vineyard (Matthew, 21:33-44). The parable is: A householder planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. He then sent his servants to collect the fruit, but the husbandmen beat or killed or stoned the servants one by one. He sent more servants, but they also were maltreated like the others. He then sent his son, but the husbandmen killed the son. Having said so much, Jesus asked:

When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? (21:40)

And those who heard answered:

He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons (21:41).

But Jesus said again:

Did ye never read in the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder (21:42-44).

That is to say, after the son had been slain, there would be another one sent by God, the one who would prove "the head of the corner," and who would seem "marvellous" in the eyes of Jesus and of all others. The

Marvellous One, therefore, would come after the son is slain. It can only be the Holy Prophet of Islam who appeared after Jesus who was put on the cross.

The third name of the Promised One is Counsellor. The name applies pre-eminently to the Holy Prophet. A nation turned to him for advice. He, in turn, held regular consultation with his people, and made it obligatory on the State to consult the people in all important matters. That the Prophet was a much-consulted person is evident from the Quran. We have:

O ye who believe, when you consult the Messenger, give alms before your consultation. That is better for you and purer. But if you find not anything to give, then know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (58:13).

The rule about giving in charity before consulting makes it clear that consulting the Prophet had become a regular institution, and a voluntary fee had been introduced to raise money for the poor. The rule was meant for those who could afford it. The Prophet had come to have so many calls on his time that it seemed possible and desirable to make a suitable charge on individual applicants. The charge was justified because the Prophet's time had to be devoted to the benefit of mankind at large; if individuals applied for the use of his time, it was meet they should pay something into the public treasury. Consulting the Prophet, therefore, had become a regular institution. The Prophet, more than anybody else, deserves to be called the Counsellor. The Prophet also instituted the system of consultation as an essential condition of good government.

Says the Quran:

...and whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation (42:39).

General measures and administrative rules are not to be initiated until the people's representatives have been consulted. Following this injunction, the Holy Prophet laid down consultation as an important duty of the *Khalīfah*, or elected head of Muslims. He is reported to have said, "There is no *Khilāfat* without consultation." (*Izālatul-Khifā 'an Khilāfatul-Khulafā*). A State administered without consulting the people would be un-Islamic. Compared with this, what did Jesus do as counsellor? He never consulted on any considerable scale. Nor did he encourage counselling as an institution. The Holy Prophet, therefore, was the counsellor of the prophecy and not Jesus.

The third name in the prophecy is mighty God. The Old Testament points to a resemblance between God and Moses. Thus in Exodus (7:1) we have:

And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh.

And again in Exodus (4:16):

and thou shalt be to him instead of God,

In the Bible, Jesus is called "son of God" and Moses a "like of God". Whenever, therefore, a human being is spoken of as a "like of God," it would mean Moses or someone like Moses. Moses, we have shown above, foretold of a Prophet like himself (Deut. 18:18), and he is no other than the Holy Prophet of Islam, he being the one who really answers to the description of the prophecy. It is the Prophet of Islam, therefore, who can most legitimately be called God or, better, a Manifestation of God. We have references relevant to this in the Quran. At the Battle of Badr, the Prophet took a handful of gravel and threw it at the enemy. This proved a signal for a dust storm which discomfited the enemy and contributed to his defeat. Of this, God says to the Prophet,

And thou threwest not when thou didst throw, but it was Allah Who threw (8:18).

Similarly at the time of entering Islam, new believers used to take the oath of allegiance to the Prophet. Referring to this God says in the Quran:

Verily those who swear allegiance to thee indeed swear allegiance to Allah (48:11).

The Prophet does service for God. The term "God" of the prophecy, therefore, applies to the Prophet rather than to anybody else. So does the expression "mighty". For it was he who was able to subjugate all his enemies in his lifetime and to smash all opposition.

The fourth name in the prophecy is everlasting Father. This also applies to the Prophet and to no one else. It was he who claimed unambiguously a lasting character for his teaching. For he foretold the second coming of Christ, but the second coming of Christ was to be in the person of one of the Prophet's own followers, not one whose coming could violate his spiritual dominion. Referring to this God says in the Quran:

And We have not sent thee save as a bringer together of all mankind—a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner; but most men know not. And they say, "When will this promise be fulfilled, if you speak the truth?" Say, "For you is an appointed day from which you cannot remain behind a single moment nor can you get ahead of it" (34:29-31).

The expression "all mankind" here points to the universal and everlasting character of the message of Islam. It is to be addressed to all nations in all ages. Disbelievers taunt the Prophet about the day promised here and ask when it will be; that is, when will the universal and everlasting character of Islam be demonstrated to the world? God says in reply that the day will come as appointed.

The day is referred to also in 32:6, thus:



He would plan the divine ordinance from the heaven unto the earth, then shall it go up to Him in a day the duration of which is a thousand years according to what you reckon.

The thing planned is Islam. In course of time its influence will begin to decline. In a thousand years it will have ascended back to heaven. The special divine support which it enjoyed in the beginning will disappear and its fortunes will be at the mercy of the natural forces of the world. From the Quran as well as the Ḥadīth, it appears that the expansion of Islam was to go on for the first three hundred years, after which was to set in the period of its decline. The decline was to go on for one thousand years. Reading together the two passages—34:29-31 and 32:6—it becomes quite clear that for a long time people would remain unconvinced of the universal and everlasting character of the message of Islam; but after 1300 years, facts and conditions would emerge which would leave the world in no doubt about it. The passages read together point to the second coming of the Messiah—promised in both the Quran and the Ḥadīth and remind us that the second coming will take place in the person of a follower of the Prophet of Islam. As the advent of the Promised Messiah would have been prophesied by other Prophets also, his rise from among the followers of the Holy Prophet would prove conclusively that the spiritual dominion of the Prophet of Islam was everlasting, that there were to be no heavenly teachers now except from among his followers. The Law and Teaching of the Holy Prophet would remain unsuperseded by any other Law or Teaching. Besides, in the Promised Messiah's time, there was great stress to be laid on the duty of preaching, resulting ultimately in the spread of Islam all over the world. When this happens, the universal and everlasting character of Islam will be established beyond doubt. The everlasting Father of the prophecy of Isaiah, therefore, is the Prophet of Islam and none other.

The fifth name in the prophecy is Prince of Peace. Prince also means king; a prince is potential king. We may, therefore, take the expression to mean King of Peace, and as such it can apply only to the Prophet of Islam. The religion which he founded is called Islam, which literally means, "peace".

We do not know in what sense Jesus can be regarded as Prince of Peace. At least one meaning of this expression would be that the person so called has an abundance of the quality called peace. Prince of Peace would, therefore, be a person who has peace in his natural gifts and is able to give peace to others. There is no evidence of this in the case of Jesus. He never had the power to administer forgiveness to his enemies. True, he preached forgiveness and taught his followers to turn the other cheek. But between profession and performance there is a world of difference, and what is really valuable is

performance, not profession. Of this performance, we have evidence only in the Holy Prophet. How cruelly he was treated by his people. There are no excesses which were not committed against him and his followers. Many among his closest relations and friends were murdered mercilessly. The Prophet's own person was a witness to these barbarities. He was their target on many different occasions and in many different ways. He had to leave his home-town and seek shelter elsewhere, as had his friends and followers. Almost all of them had to suffer the pangs of separation from their near and dear ones. Some were torn asunder while tied to two camels running in opposite directions. Women were killed by spears thrust in their private parts. Slaves who believed in him were stripped and dragged on burning sand and gravel. They were persecuted and asked to renounce their faith. The bodies of Muslims killed in battle were mutilated. In short, early Muslims—men and women, old and young, dead and living—had to suffer to the utmost and in a variety of ways. But at last God made them triumphant. The Holy Prophet, with ten thousand followers, re-entered Mecca as a victor. The cruel enemy was at his feet, thinking no punishment too much for what he had done. Yet all that the Prophet said to them was, "This day, I forgive you all" (*Hishām*). The Prophet had the power to avenge the wrongs done to him, and his followers. But he chose to forgive and to desist even from any injury to their sentiments. When Muslims were advancing towards Mecca, a Muslim general was heard to say that on that day they would repay the Meccans in their own coin (*Bukhārī*). The Prophet deposed the general, saying that such remarks were calculated to hurt the Meccans. Do we meet with any such thing in the life of Jesus? Or in the lives of his disciples? Or, in the whole of Christian history? There is no doubt that Christians also suffered much persecution and hardship, and were a weak people. But the time came when they were installed in power. How did they then treat their enemies? Is not history dyed red with the blood of their enemies? How then can Jesus be called Prince of Peace? He himself could not afford peace to others. His followers were able to afford it, but did not give it. Instead, they gave death and destruction. The Prophet of Islam had the power to punish his enemies for wrongs many times more savage than those perpetrated by Jews against Jesus. Still he chose to forgive. The Prophet was, therefore, the Prince of Peace of Isaiah's prophecy.

The seventh sign of the Promised One, according to Isaiah (9:7) was:

Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end.

The sign clearly applies to the Prophet of Islam and not to Jesus. Jesus did not attain to any political power. The Prophet did, and his followers became rulers of the whole of the then known world; and so well did they rule that it is impossible to find a parallel.

The eighth sign was:

Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever (9:7).

Did Jesus ever ascend the throne of David? It may be said he did so 300 years later, when the Roman Emperor became Christian. But the prophecy lays down that the throne is to be retained forever. The hold of Jesus lasted for about 300 years when it ended with the rise of Islam, and now for 1300 years, Palestine—the throne of David—has been in the possession of Muslims. What is nearer to the expression "for ever" in the prophecy 300 years or 1300? No doubt, today a Christian power holds Palestine. But it is significant from our standpoint that the British are there not as rulers but as holders of a mandate. A temporary lapse in the Muslim possession cannot contradict the prophecy.

The rule which the Prophet of Islam established in the world through his followers was full of judgement and justice, to use the words of the prophecy. We have historical evidence to prove this. In the time of ‘Umar, the Second *Khalīfah* of Islam, a Muslim army had to withdraw temporarily from Christian territory under the pressure of superior Roman forces. Before they did, they collected the inhabitants and told them that they could no longer protect their lives and property; so they were returning to them the money they had realized from them as tax. The Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem were so impressed by this singular act of good judgement and justice that they came out with the Muslim army, wailing and praying for the Muslims speedy return. (The Caliphate and Futūḥ). Little wonder Isaiah says of the Promised One:

Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgement and with justice (9:7).

(e) In Isaiah (19:21-25) we have:

And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day; and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

This prophecy speaks of a time when God would manifest Himself to the people of Egypt who would, therefore, come to know Him and would make

sacrifices and offerings to Him; Egypt and Syria would unite, the inhabitants of each would visit the other; and both would join in a common form of worship.

This prophecy also was fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of Islam. The people of Egypt did become Christian, but only for a short time of their history. Now for 1300 years Egyptians have been Muslims. In the words of Isaiah, God says to the Egyptians; "Blessed be Egypt my people," Let the Egyptians speak for themselves, Do they owe allegiance to Jesus or to the Prophet of Islam?

We then have:

and Assyria the work of my hands.

Similarly let the Assyrians speak for themselves. Do they attribute themselves to Jesus or the Prophet of Islam?

And we have: "and Israel mine inheritance". Who holds Palestine, the land of Israel?

No doubt, under European and American influence, Jews are entering Palestine. But the Jews are not the followers of Jesus. And in any case Muslims still form a majority in this land of Israel, and Christians still a minority. If Jews take possession of the land it will only mean a temporary lapse in the Muslim possession, and whether it is Jews or Muslims who possess the land, Jesus can have no claim on the prophecy,

The prophecy speaks of "a highway out of Egypt into Assyria," i.e. a sign of active contact between the two countries. The prophecy pictures the inhabitants of the two countries visiting and befriending each other and joining in a common mode of worship. Who brought all this about; was it Jesus? Christians were in possession of both Egypt and Assyria and a majority of the inhabitants of these countries, at one time, were Christian. But during this time, did the conditions arise of which the prophecy speaks? According to the prophecy, the two countries were to develop such intimate contact that for all practical purposes they were to become one people, with one language and one faith. Some contact between two neighbouring countries is normal and natural. But the contact between Egypt and Assyria was to be different; it was to result in welding two peoples into one, and to give them a common nationality. Such a fusion between the two never occurred in the time of Christian rule. Under Rome, Egypt and Syria were parts of the same empire, but the mode of administration in the two countries remained different. Egypt was a semi-independent kingdom, and Assyria was under a Roman Governor. The Egyptian Church also was different from the Assyrian Church. In Egypt, under the influence of the Alexandrian Church, Christianity had assumed a form different from that of the Palestinian or Syrian Church. The Egyptians worshipped in their own language, Coptic, and Syrians in a corrupt mixture of Hebrew and Greek. Under Islam conditions became quite different. For

centuries Egypt and Syria remained under one rule. Both began to speak and still speak one language. Both adopted and still keep up a common mode of worship. Both developed a common consciousness. Syrian scholars went to Egypt and were honoured as Egyptian savants. Egyptian scholars went to Syria and were honoured as Syrian savants. Even today, while the Muslim world under European diplomacy lies dismembered, the Arab League is a united body of Egyptians, Syrians and Palestinians. The three seem to share and to be proud of a common nationality. This prophecy of Isaiah, therefore, was fulfilled in and through the Holy Prophet of Islam and his followers. To apply this to Jesus and the Christian Church seems utter extravagance.

(f) In Isaiah (62:2) we have:

...and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

Quite evidently, the prophecy foretells of a new movement, with a new name, and the new name will not be one assumed by the movement, but one proposed for it by God in His revealed word. Annotators of the Bible apply this prophecy to the Christian Church, notwithstanding the common knowledge that the names Christian and Christianity, or the many names by which Christian sects are known, were never proposed by God in His revealed word but were assumed by the people. There is one people alone in all the world who have a name given to them by God, and they are Muslims. Thus the Quran says:

He named you Muslims both before and in this Book (22:79).

This is a clear reference to the prophecies of Isaiah. The verse of the Quran seems to say, "We foretold that your name will not be one of your choice but one of Our choice. Accordingly, today, We give you the name—Muslim." The name is derived from *salām* which means Peace, and this is in keeping with one of the titles of the Promised Prophet—"Prince of Peace". The prophecy was marvellous. Equally marvellous is the fact that only Muslims claim to have received their name from God in His own revealed word. Isaiah foretold that a Prophet would come the name of whose followers would be chosen by God and announced in His revealed word. The Holy Prophet of Islam is that Prophet; his followers have been named Muslims by God, and his religion Islam.

### **Prophecies of Daniel**

According to the Book of Daniel, chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had a dream, which he forgot soon after. Then he called upon the wise men of his time to tell him both the dream and its meaning. None of

them, however, was able to do so. Daniel prayed to God, and had the dream and its meaning revealed to him.

The dream was as follows:—

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31-35).

The interpretation which Daniel gave of the dream was the following:

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron,; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the

interpretation thereof sure (Daniel 2:37-45).

In Daniel's interpretation, the gold head is the king of Babylon; the silver breast and arms the kingdoms of Persia and Midia, which arose after the kingdom of Babylon; the brass thighs stand for the Greek Empire under Alexander, which became dominant after Persia and Midia; and the iron legs stand for the Roman Empire which attained to power on the decline of the Alexandrian Empire. About this last, the dream says:

his feet (i.e. the image's) part of iron and part of clay (2:33).

The description points to the fact that the Roman Empire would cover parts of Europe as well as Asia. Iron legs denote the European part of the Roman Empire and point to the strength of a single nationality and a single faith. But the feet, says the dream, were partly of iron, partly of clay. This meant that the European power was to subjugate parts of Asia and thus become an imperial power. Imperial powers command large territories and vast resources, but they also suffer from the inherent weakness which comes from lack of cohesion among their peoples. The dream evidently means that in the latter years the Roman Empire would begin to decline because of this lack of cohesion. The dream, however, proceeds to say more important things:

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35).

Here we have a prediction of the rise of Islam. Early Islam clashed first with Rome and then with Iran. When they clashed with Rome, Rome had conquered the Alexandrian Empire of Greece and had become more powerful than ever; and when they clashed with Iran, Iran had extended its power over Babylon. When their clashes resulted in the destruction of both Rome and Iran, then did the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold break to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. The order of events in the dream and their interpretation by Daniel leave no doubt as to their meaning.

Everybody knows that Babylon was succeeded by Persia and Midia and the power of Persia and Midia was broken by Alexander and the Empire of Alexander was replaced by that of Rome which, from its Eastern seat of authority at Constantinople, laid the foundation of a mighty Europeo-Asiatic Empire. This Asiatic Roman Empire was defeated and destroyed by the Holy Prophet and his Companions. Once receiving a report that the Roman armies

intended to attack the Muslims, he led an expedition in person to the Syrian border. But no regular fighting then took place. Irregular skirmishes and raids, however, continued till regular fighting was resumed in the time of Abū Bakr which resulted in the total discomfiture and annihilation of the Roman Empire in the time of ‘Umar, the Second *Khalifah*, when the Persian Empire also suffered defeat at the hands of Muslim armies. Thus both these once mighty empires shrank into diminutive and distant States.

We have references to the "stone" of Daniel's prophecy in Isaiah and Matthew. In Isaiah 8:14 we read of a Holy One:

And he shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And in 8:15:—

And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

And from Matthew, chapter 21, it appears that the Promised One—the stone of the prophecy—is not Jesus, but another coming after Jesus, and in 21:44 we have a fine description of the stone:

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Similarly in Psalms 118:22 we have:

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

To this there is reference also in Matthew (21:42):

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

As we have shown above, Jesus himself denies all claim to this prophecy, which applies to one coming after the son is slain. Christians today fondly apply the prophecy to their Church. But this attempt will not avail. According to Daniel, the thighs of the image were made of brass, the legs (i.e. the Roman Empire) of iron and the feet of iron and clay; the stone smote the image upon his feet. Early Islam, that is to say, was to dash with the borders of the Asiatic part of the Roman Empire and smash it to pieces. The Roman Empire was the temporal expression of the Christian Church. The stone of the prophecy, therefore, was to clash with the Church. The stone could not be the Church, for the Church could not clash with the Church. Nor could it be Jesus. For Jesus came long before the Eastern Roman Empire. Whoever destroyed the



might of the Roman Empire, fulfilled this prophecy. The prophecy, therefore, applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam and his followers, and to no one else.

The prophecy goes on to say:

The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:35).

This is exactly what happened. The Holy Prophet and his band of devotees defeated the Kaiser and the Chosroes, and Muslims became rulers over the whole of the then known world. The stone did become a great mountain; for a thousand years the direction of world affairs remained in the hands of Muslims.

### **Prophecies in the New Testament**

We turn now to prophecies about the Prophet of Islam which are recorded in the New Testament.

(a) In Matthew (21:33-46) we read:

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

We have referred to this prophecy before. In this beautiful parable Jesus has presented an epitome of the history of Prophets. The passage leaves no doubt that vineyard means the world; husbandmen mean mankind at large; fruits which the householder wishes to collect mean virtue, piety and devotion to God; servants mean Prophets who have been coming into the world one after the other; son means Jesus who appeared after a long line of Prophets. The son was dishonoured and slain by the husbandmen. Having said this, Jesus goes on to speak of "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." The stone which had been rejected is the progeny of Ishmael, whom the sons of Isaac used to treat with contempt. According to the prophecy, one from among the sons of Ishmael was to appear and become the head of the corner, "the Seal of the Prophets", to use the well-known expression of the Quran—no ordinary Prophet, but one who would bring a final and complete law from God. The advent of an Ishmaelite for the grand office would seem strange too. Yet (as Jesus says) God would take away His kingdom from the Israelites and give it to the Ishmaelites, who would prove a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, that is, a people who would keep alive the worship of God in the world. Everybody should be able to see that the only outstanding Prophet who came after Jesus and who could be said to answer to this description is the Holy Prophet of Islam. He it was who came into conflict with Judaism and Christianity and completely shattered the influence of both. He it was whose race was hated. Of him alone could it be truly said, "Whosoever fell on him was broken and on whomsoever he fell was ground to powder."

(b) In Matthew (23:38-39) we have:

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The verses mean that Jesus is going to depart from his people and his people will not be able to see him again, until they declare:

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

There is a prophecy here of two advents. One after the departure of Jesus; this was to be like the advent of God. The other was the second advent of Jesus himself. It is made clear that until the one who "cometh in the name of the Lord" has come, the second coming of Jesus will not take place. We have proved above that one who comes in the name of the Lord is the one resembling Moses.

The prophecy of Jesus and the certain fact of the advent of Islam and its Holy Prophet leave no doubt that in the divine scheme the advent of Jesus was not to mark the last great stage in spiritual advance. The last stage was to be

marked by the advent of one coming "in the name of the Lord". It cannot be said that after him Jesus is to come again, so the last stage in spiritual advance will still be marked by Jesus. The point is made clear by Jesus himself. Did he not say:

Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matthew, 23:39).

Only they will see, receive and acknowledge Jesus on his second coming who will first have accepted and acknowledged "the like of Moses". A denier of "the like of Moses" will not be able to recognize Jesus when he comes a second time. And why not? Because Jesus, when he comes again, will be found among the followers of "the like of Moses". Only they will be able to believe in the second coming of Jesus who will first have believed in "the like of Moses". Jesus, therefore, when he comes a second time, will be no independent teacher. He will be a strict follower and an image of "the like of Moses". The last stage of spiritual advance, therefore, will be marked by this "like of Moses," and by no one else.

(c) We read in John (1:20-21) that people went to John the Baptist, and asked him if he were the Christ of the prophecy, and he said, No. Then they asked him,

What then? Art thou Elias?

And he saith,

I am not (1:21).

Then they asked him,

Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No (1:21).

And then they said,

Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? (1:25)

It is evident from this that three prophecies were current in the time of Jesus: (i) the second coming of Elias; (ii) the birth of Christ; (iii) the coming of that Prophet, that is, the Promised One of the prophecy in Deuteronomy. The three were believed to be separate persons.

Now Jesus has declared that John himself is Elias. Thus in Matthew (11:14) we have:

And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

From Luke (1:17) it also appears that before the birth of John, his father Zacharias had the revelation:

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.

Then in Mark (9:13) we have Jesus declaring:

That Elias is indeed come.

And again in Matthew (17:12):

That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.

From all these passages, it is clear that according to the Gospels, the second coming of Elias had taken place in John. As for Christ, it is agreed that he is no other than Jesus of the New Testament. Only "that Prophet" remains. He is neither John, nor Jesus, because he is different from both, a third. It is also known that "that Prophet" had not appeared until the time of Jesus. So it is clear that "that Prophet" of the Bible had to appear, according to the testimony of the Gospels, sometime after Jesus. After Jesus, no one has claimed to be "that Prophet" and indeed no one seems to fulfil the signs attributed to "that Prophet" except the Holy Prophet of Islam.

(d) In Luke (24:49) we have:

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

From this verse also it appears that after Jesus there was to be another. And who is he except the Holy Prophet? No one excepting him has ever made the claim.

(e) In John (14:26) we have:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

This prophecy also is true only of the Prophet of Islam. True, it says "whom the Father will send in my name". But "in my name" can only mean "he will bear testimony to my truth." The Holy Prophet testified to the truth of Jesus as a divine and honoured teacher and Prophet and declared them mistaken and misguided who thought him accursed. The prophecy says clearly, "He shall teach you all things." The words are reminiscent of those used in the prophecy in Deuteronomy. The description applies only to the Holy Prophet; and it was his teaching which brought comfort to the world.

(f) In John (16:7-14) we have:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but

whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The prophecy lays down that the Comforter will come after the departure of Jesus. When the Comforter comes, he will reprove the world of sin and truth and justice. Of sin, because he will accuse the Jews of disbelief in Jesus. Of truth, because he will correct the erroneous belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and because he will assure the world, that Jesus of Nazareth—the teacher who appeared to Israel—will not again come into the world in person. Of justice, because he will put an end to all satanic forces. The prophecy also says that when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide them into all truth, that the Book revealed to him will contain no human word, that he will foretell things to come, and that he will glorify Jesus and clear him of all charges.

This prophecy unmistakably applies to the Holy Prophet. It says quite clearly that unless Jesus departs, the Comforter cannot come. From The Acts (3:21-22) it also appears that the Prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:18 is to appear sometime between the departure of Jesus and his second coming. The Comforter, therefore, is no other than the Promised One of Deuteronomy 18:18. The prophecy says that the Promised One will reprove the deniers of Jesus. The Promised One could not be a Christian. It is but usual for followers to reprove the deniers of their Prophet. The prophecy must relate to one who would belong to another people, with no racial or religious connection with Jesus but being truthful and God-sent, he should respect the cause of all true Prophets and promote respect and reverence for them all. The Prophet of Islam was an Ishmaelite, not a Christian or Jew. But how he defends the honour of Jesus! Referring to the Jews the Quran (4:158-161) says:

And their saying, We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah whereas they slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it: they have no definite knowledge, thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty; on the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself. And Allah is Mighty, Wise; and there is none among the People of the Book but will believe in it before his death; and on the day of Resurrection, he (Jesus) shall be a witness against them. So, because of the transgression of the Jews, We forbade them pure things which had been allowed to them, and also because of their hindering many men from Allah's way.

The excesses of the Jews were their disbelief, their cruel charge against

Mary, and their utterly false claim that they had put to death Jesus, a Messenger of God. The truth about this claim was that they had failed to kill Jesus either by the sword or by crucifixion. They had only strong suspicion that Jesus had died on the cross. But it was only a suspicion, not a certain belief. They themselves continued to differ among themselves and had no agreed view as to what had madly happened to Jesus. Possessing no certain knowledge, they merely speculated. But this is certain that they failed in their design to put Jesus to death. Allah, on the other hand, saved him from an accursed death on the cross and admitted him to the circle of His favoured ones, and Allah is both Powerful and Wise. Every follower of the Book will continue to affirm his belief in the death of Jesus on the cross, but on the Judgement Day Jesus himself will depose against them all and accuse them of affirming a falsehood. Because of these excesses of the Jews, God withdrew from them those heavenly blessings which formerly seemed their birthright. The passage speaks for itself.

A second sign in the prophecy of John (16:7-14) is that the Promised One will correct the erroneous belief in the resurrection of Jesus and prove that Jesus, the Israelite, will not come to the world again. This duty was duly performed by the Holy Prophet of Islam; he exposed the error that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven where he was still alive. Says the Quran (5:117-119):

And when Allah will say, "O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?' ", he will answer, "Holy art Thou. I could never say that to which I had no right. If I had said it, Thou wouldst have surely known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who art the Knower of hidden things. I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me—"Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the Watcher over them; and Thou art witness over all things. If Thou punish them, they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them, Thou surely art the Mighty, the Wise."

The interrogation and the reply are to take place on the Judgement Day. The passage declares that Jesus is dead, and not alive in heaven; only his followers raised him to godhead after he had died and departed from this world. Ascending to heaven only means that, having done his duty, he had gone to his Maker, honoured and successful.

The prophecy (John 16:7-14) also said that Satan and satanic forces will be smashed at the hands of the Promised One. Of all the Prophets, the Prophet

of Islam stands pre-eminent in the designing of measures against all satanic forces and influences and for the promotion of purity and piety in human life. We cannot go into a detailed exposition of such points here. The reader will find it elsewhere in this work. We may only say that at least one visible proof of this claim of ours on behalf of the Prophet is the prayer for protection against the influence of Satan which the Prophet taught his followers, and on the frequent use of which he insisted, viz. *I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected*. The prayer is in habitual use by Muslims. We know of nothing like it in the teachings of other Prophets. Muslims, more than any other people, are alive to their daily duty of defeating the designs of Satan. They, more than any other people, have been taught this duty. They, more than any other people, are deserving of the promise contained in the prophecy. Their Prophet, therefore, will be said to have fulfilled the prophecy. To kill Satan, however, is not to kill him outright, so that his influence, no longer remains in the world. This has never happened and never will happen. Satanic influences and temptations must remain. Without them faith will have no value. To kill Satan, therefore, is to reduce evil influences and propensities to a minimum, and to promote good influences and dispositions to a maximum. The Church cannot lay claim to this part of the prophecy because the Church has declared the Law a curse and cast doubt over the very conceptions of good and evil. The words in the prophecy—"he will guide you into all truth"—we have already explained in our discussion of the prophecy contained in Deuteronomy 18:18.

Of the promise—"he will show you things to come"—we need only say that no other Prophet has told the world of things to come so much as has the Prophet of Islam.

Of the sign—"he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak"—we should say that the description can apply only to the Prophet of Islam. The New and the Old Testaments do not contain a single book in which man's word has not been mixed with God's. The Quran is nothing but the word of God from beginning to end. Not a word even of the Prophet is to be found in it, let alone anybody else's.

The last sign in the prophecy—"he will glorify me"—also applies to the Holy Prophet. For it is he who cleared Jesus of the charge that, having died on the cross, he met an accursed death; and of the charge that, having claimed Godhead for himself, Jesus had been guilty of disobedience and disloyalty to God; and of the other foul charges which the Jews had brought against him.

(g) In the Acts (3:21-24) we have:

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets

since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

The verses contain a reference to the prophecy in Deuteronomy and the clear hint that until the Prophet promised in the prophecy in Deuteronomy has come, the second coming of Jesus will not take place. The prophecy in Deuteronomy said that the Promised Prophet would bring a new Law. Reference to this in The Acts means clearly that the teaching of Jesus will be superseded by the teaching of the Promised One. A new Law can have no other meaning. The Prophet promised in the prophecy in Deuteronomy (and in this passage from The Acts), therefore, was to mark the last stage in the spiritual advance of man. For he was to supersede Moses and Jesus and give the world a new Teaching and a new Law.

The passage from The Acts points to another significant sign of the Promised One. It says:

All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days (3:24).

The prophecy of Moses we have already cited. As Jesus came after Samuel, this verse from The Acts can only mean that from Moses to Jesus, every Prophet has foretold the advent of a Prophet, which means that until this Prophet appears, the spiritual foundations on which man must build will not have been completely laid. As this Prophet, according to the signs of the Bible, is no other than the Holy Prophet of Islam, we must admit that the Holy Prophet is the Promised One of all Prophets and his Law is the Law prophesied by all Prophets. Who can then say that even while the Old and the New Testaments existed in the world, the Quran was a redundancy? All the earlier Prophets have pointed to the need of the Quran and prophesied about it. No reasonable plea can be urged by their followers now against the Quran. We can only say that if they deny the need of the Quran, they will cast doubts on the truth of their own Prophets and the truth of the prophecies which they made. Did not Moses say:

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him (Deut. 18:22).



## THE HOLY PROPHET—A LIFE SKETCH

We have answered the question concerning the need for the revelation of the Quran in the presence of other religious books. We wish now to give a life-sketch of the Holy Prophet. The connection between a revelation and its recipient is intimate, and we cannot hope to understand the one without the other.

The philosopher is able to dissociate what a person says from the person saying and to think of each in isolation from the other. An Arabic proverb regards what a person says as more important than the person saying it. But the great majority of ordinary human beings make no distinction between the two and regard both as equally important. With regard to a revealed Book it seems particularly important that, when we study it, we should keep in view the life and character of the person who received the Book from God and communicated it to his generation. A religious teaching, however well-argued, is not accepted by a people unless it captivates them by a strong personality appeal. This is because religious Law is different in aim from secular law. The State stands for stability and order. It seeks to establish external obedience; for this it is enough to have laws which secure external good behaviour. Motives do not matter so long as there is no visible departure from the law. Bad motives are not punished by any court of law unless they result in bad conduct. But from the standpoint of religion, motives are as important as the actions which result from them. They are even more important. Actions are also important—they are the symptoms and signs of invisible motives. But an improvement in visible actions is no guarantee of improvement in invisible motives. An improvement in invisible motives, however, is a guarantee of improvement in visible actions. Fire without warmth is impossible; so is purity of heart impossible without purity of conduct. Temporary lapses or indolence there may be; but in general, purity of heart must lead to purity of conduct.

Now purity of heart is best promoted by concrete example. A good law appeals to our understanding and reason; but a good example appeals to our motives and sentiments. A good law rouses us to think, but a good example rouses us to action. When thinking becomes refined, it may or may not result in a refinement of our physical and spiritual character. It may result only in spasms of good conduct—not in a steady and stable character. The point is illustrated by the difference between ordinary altruistic conduct and altruistic conduct which springs from natural instincts such as the maternal instinct. One springs largely from reason, the other largely from emotions. Conduct which springs from reason cannot compete with conduct which springs from emotions or dispositions which grow out of emotions.

A mother's love and care for her child spring from emotions or from dispositions, shaped out of emotions. The philosopher's regard for his neighbour springs from reasoned altruism. Reasoned conduct is not constant or consistent, because reflection often tends to fail and all the relevant facts cannot always be attended to before action is ordered. Hesitation and deliberation, the essentials of all reasoned conduct, also tend to be prolonged. But conduct which springs from emotions or from tendencies shaped out of emotions is spontaneous, constant and consistent. A mother may seem over-sacrificing, but rational appeals will not dissuade her from the path laid down for her by nature. When the child is in trouble, she will not sit and deliberate, but will at once set about doing what she thinks is good for the child. All her thoughts will bend to this end. It seems, therefore, that themes of moral reclamation will not succeed unless human individuals can be taught to act from dispositions and sentiments rooted in their natural emotions and impulses. When the call comes for action, response should not be held back by undue deliberation. It should spring spontaneously from within each individual and should not have to be forced from without by appeals to reason.

True, emotions are usually accorded a place second to reason. But this is because we only think of uncultured or misguided emotions. Conduct which becomes related to emotions only reduces or abolishes the period of hesitation and deliberation intervening between a call for action and the action itself. The elimination of this period is necessary if actions are to be quick and numerous. A person who deliberates too much or too often wastes time which should be spent in action. But the person who grasps a truth and then converts that truth into an emotion never hesitates to respond whenever there is a call for action. Such a person can never be beaten by one given to deliberating. His output is twenty times more than the output of the other. Spontaneity and apparent impulsiveness cannot reduce the value of his actions. For he does not really act from impulses: he deliberates and acquires insight into ends and means. This insight he welds into his emotions. He acts spontaneously and apparently unthinkingly, but his actions have a rational basis and are the result of deliberation. Only for him deliberation once concluded, does not have to be gone through again and again. To deliberate overmuch or to deliberate again and again cannot be rational. Any large-scale reclamation or reconstruction of the world, therefore, will have to wait not on intellectual clarity and intellectual conviction, but will have to be linked with the normal emotions and impulses of man. The greatest possible intellectual clarity will not rid us of doubts and uncertainties. There is one way to escape doubts, and that is to grasp a truth and then to assimilate it into our character. When this is done, truths no longer strike us as objects for apprehension or enjoyment, but serve as signals and guides for action and achievement. For the ordinary man, this

assimilation of truths into everyday character is not possible, save under the influence of practical examples. Reasoning may stimulate our understanding; it cannot stimulate self-denial which only a living exemplar of self-sacrifice and self-denial can. Words used in prayers may be most appropriate and persuasive, but nothing will induce the absorption needed in prayer more than the sight of an actual worshipper absorbed in prayer.

But we should not be misunderstood. An example can be misleading and dangerous. It must be examined before it can be allowed to influence us. Unless it has been examined and found satisfying, imitation of it will only result in habit-ridden individuals and a custom-ridden society. What we need, therefore, is both a reasoned teaching and a spotless practical exemplar. Thank God, Books revealed by Him have been revealed to Prophets, not dropped from above. Books appeal to our understanding, Prophets to our heart. No wonder, Prophets make a much deeper impression on the world than do philosophers; they succeed where philosophers fail. Philosophers seek to clarify our thinking, not to convert us by their good example. But Prophets do both. They excite our intellect through their Books and our hearts through their example. Their recorded teaching sharpens our understanding, while the signs of Divine existence witnessed in their persons promote certainty, faith and fervour.

It seems to us, therefore, that in this General Introduction we should give some account of the life and character of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

### **Life of the Prophet — An Open Book**

The life of the Holy Founder of Islam is like an open book, to any part of which one may turn and meet with interesting details. The life of no other teacher or Prophet is as well-recorded and as accessible to study as is the life of the Holy Prophet. True, this abundance of recorded fact has given malicious critics their opportunity. But it is also true that when the criticisms have been examined and disposed of, the faith and devotion which result cannot be inspired by any other life. Obscure lives escape criticism, but they fail to produce conviction and confidence in their devotees. Some disappointments and difficulties are bound to remain. But a life as rich in recorded detail as the Prophet's inspires reflection and, then, conviction. When criticism and false constructions have been liquidated, such a life is bound to endear itself to us completely and forever.

It should be evident, however, that the story of a life so open and so rich cannot even briefly be told. Only a glimpse of it can be attempted. But even a glimpse is worthwhile. A religious book, as we say, can have little appeal unless a study of it can be supplemented by a knowledge of its Teacher. The point has been missed by many religions. The Hindu religion, for instance,

upholds the Vedas, but of the Rishis who received the Vedas from God it is able to tell us nothing. The need to supplement a message by an account of the messenger does not seem to have impressed itself upon Hindu exponents. Jewish and Christian scholars, on the other hand, do not hesitate to denounce their own Prophets. They forget that revelation which has failed to reclaim its recipient cannot be of much use to others. If the recipient is intractable, the questions arise: *Why did God choose him? Must He have done so?* Neither supposition seems reasonable. To think that revelation fails to reclaim some recipients is as unreasonable as to think that God has no alternative except to choose incompetent recipients for some of His revelations. Yet ideas of this kind have found their way into different religions, possibly because of the distance which now divides them from their Founders or because human intellect, until the advent of Islam, was incapable of perceiving the error of these ideas. How important and valuable it is to keep together a Book and its teacher was realized very early in Islam. One of the Prophet's holy consorts was the young 'Ā'ishah. She was thirteen to fourteen years of age when she was married to the Prophet. For about eight years she lived in wedlock with him. When the Prophet died she was about twenty-two years of age. She was young and illiterate: Yet she knew that a teaching cannot be divorced from its teacher. Asked to describe the Prophet's character, she answered at once that his character was the Quran (*Abū Dāwūd*). What he did was what the Quran taught; what the Quran taught was nothing else than what he did. It redounds to the glory of the Prophet that an illiterate young woman was able to grasp a truth which escaped Hindu, Jewish and Christian scholars.

'Ā'ishah expressed a great and an important truth in a crisp little sentence: it is impossible for a true and honest teacher to teach one thing but practise another, or to practise one thing but teach another. The Prophet was a true and honest teacher. This is what 'Ā'ishah evidently wanted to say. He practised what he preached and preached what he practised. To know him is to know the Quran and to know the Quran is to know him.

### **Arabia at the time of the Prophet's Birth**

The Prophet was born in Mecca in August 570 A.D. He was given the name *Muḥammad* which means *the Praised One*. To understand his life and character, we must have some idea of the conditions which obtained in Arabia at the time of his birth.

When he was born, almost the whole of Arabia believed in a polytheistic form of religion. The Arabs traced their descent to Abraham. They knew that Abraham was a monotheistic teacher. In spite of this, they entertained polytheistic beliefs and were given to polytheistic practices. In defence, they said that some human beings are outstanding in their contact with God. Their

intercession on behalf of others is accepted by God. To reach Him is difficult for ordinary human beings. They must have others to intercede for them in order to obtain God's pleasure and help. Thus they were able to combine their reverence for Abraham with their own polytheistic beliefs. Abraham, they said, was a holy man. He was able to reach God without intercession, whilst ordinary Meccans could not do so. The people of Mecca, therefore, had made idols of holy and righteous persons, and these they worshipped and to these they made offerings in order to please God through them. This attitude was primitive, illogical and full of defects. But the Meccans were not worried by these. They had not had a monotheistic teacher for a long time, and polytheism, once it takes root, spreads and knows no bounds. The number of gods begins to increase. At the time of the Prophet's birth, it is said that in the Ka'bah alone, the Sacred Mosque of all Islam and the house of worship built by Abraham and his son Ishmael, there were 360 idols. It seems that for every day of the lunar year the Meccans had an idol. In other big centres there were other idols, so that we can say that every part of Arabia was steeped in polytheistic belief. The Arabs were devoted to the culture of speech. They were much interested in their spoken language and were very keen on its advance. Their intellectual ambitions, however, were scant. Of history, geography, mathematics, etc., they knew nothing. But as they were a desert people and had to find their way about in the desert without the assistance of landmarks, they had developed a keen interest in astronomy. There was in the whole of Arabia not a single school. It is said that in Mecca only a few individuals could read and write.

From the moral point of view, the Arabs were a contradictory people. They suffered from some extreme moral defects but at the same time they possessed some admirable qualities. They were given to excessive drinking. To become drunk and to run wild under the effect of drink was for them a virtue, not a vice. Their conception of a gentleman was one who should entertain his friends and neighbours to drinking bouts. Every rich man would hold a drinking party at least five times a day. Gambling was their national sport. But they had made of it a fine art. They did not gamble in order to become rich. Winners were expected to entertain their friends. In times of war, funds were collected through gambling. Even today we have the institution of prize-bonds to raise money for war. The institution has been resuscitated in our time by the people of Europe and America. But they should remember that in this they only imitate the Arabs. When war came, Arabian tribes would hold a gambling party. Whoever won had to bear the greater part of the expenses of the war.

Of the amenities of civilized life, the Arabs knew nothing. Their chief occupation was trade, and to this end they sent their caravans to far-off places,

such as Abyssinia, Syria, Palestine and even India. The rich among them were great admirers of Indian swords. Their clothing needs were supplied largely by Yemen and Syria. The trading centres were the towns. The rest of Arabia, excepting Yemen and some northern parts, was Bedouin. There were no permanent settlements, or places of habitation. The tribes had divided the country between them so that members of a tribe wandered about freely in their part of the country. When the water supply in any place was exhausted, they would move on to some other place and settle down. Their capital consisted of sheep, goats and camels. From the wool they made cloth, and from the skins they made tents. What was left over they sold in the market. Gold and silver were not unknown, but they were certainly very rare possessions. The poor and the common folks made ornaments of cowries and sweet-smelling substances. Seeds of melons were cleaned, dried and strung together to make necklaces. Crime and immoralities of various kinds were rampant. Theft was rare but dacoity was common. To attack and to dispossess one another was regarded a birthright. But, at the same time, they honoured their word more than any other people. Should an individual go to a powerful leader or tribe and ask for protection, that leader or tribe was honour-bound to protect that individual. If this was not done, the tribe lost caste throughout Arabia. Poets commanded great prestige. They were honoured as national leaders. Leaders were expected to possess great powers of speech and even to be able to compose verse. Hospitality had developed into a national virtue. A forlorn traveller on arrival at the headquarters of a tribe would be treated as an honoured guest. The best animals would be slaughtered for him and the utmost consideration shown. They did not care who the visitor was. It was enough that a visitor had arrived. The visit meant an increase of status and prestige for the tribe. It became the tribe's duty, therefore, to honour the visitor. By honouring him it honoured itself. Woman in this Arab society had no status and no rights. Among them it was thought honourable to put baby girls to death. It is a mistake, however, to think that infanticide was practised on a country-wide scale. Such a dangerous institution could not flourish throughout a country. That would have meant the extinction of the race. The truth is that in Arabia, or for that matter in India or any other country where infanticide has ever existed, it has been confined only to certain families. The Arab families who practised it either had an exaggerated notion of their social status or they were constrained in other ways. Possibly they were unable to find suitable young men for their daughters to marry; knowing this, they put to death their baby girls. The evil of this institution lies in its savageness and its cruelty, not in the results which it has in terms of a nation's population. Different methods were used for killing baby girls, among them were burying alive and strangulation.

Only the biological mother was regarded as a mother in Arab society. Stepmothers were not regarded as mothers and there was no ban on a son's marrying his stepmother on the death of his father. Polygamous marriages were very common, and there was no limit to the number of wives a man could take. More than one sister could also be taken to wife by the same person at one and the same time.

The worst treatment was meted out by combatant sides to one another in war. Where hatred was strong, they did not hesitate to split the bodies of the wounded, take out parts and eat them in cannibal fashion. They did not hesitate to mutilate the bodies of their enemies. Cutting off the nose or ears, or plucking out an eye was a common form of cruelty practised by them. Slavery was widespread. Weak tribes were made slaves. The slave had no accepted status. Every master did as he liked with his slaves. No action could be taken against a master who maltreated his slave. A master could murder his slave without having to answer for it. If one master murdered another's slave, even then the penalty was not death. All that was required of him was to compensate the aggrieved master suitably. Women-slaves were used to satisfy sexual desires. The children born of such unions were also treated as slaves. Women-slaves who became mothers remained slaves. In terms of civilization and social advance the Arabs were a very backward people. Kindness and consideration to one another were unknown. Woman had the worst status possible. Still the Arabs possessed some virtues. Individual bravery, for instance, sometimes reached a very high level.

It was among such people that the Holy Prophet of Islam was born. His father 'Abdullāh had died before his birth. Accordingly, he and his mother Āminah had to be looked after by the grandfather, 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib. The child Muḥammad was suckled by a countrywoman who lived in a place near Ṭā'if. It was a custom in Arabia in those days to hand over children to women living in the countryside, whose duty was to bring up the children, to train their speech and to give them a good start in bodily health. When the Prophet was in his sixth year, his mother died while travelling from Medina to Mecca and had to be buried *en route*. The child was brought to Mecca by a woman-servant and handed over to the grandfather. When he was in his eighth year, his grandfather also died, after which Abū Ṭālib, his uncle, became his guardian, this being the wish expressed in a will by the grandfather. The Prophet had two or three opportunities to travel out of Arabia. One of these occurred when, at the age of twelve, he went in the company of Abū Ṭālib to Syria. It seems that this journey took him only to the south-eastern towns of Syria, for in historical references to this journey there is no mention of places like Jerusalem. From now onwards until he grew up to young manhood he remained in Mecca. From very childhood he was given to reflection and

meditation. In the quarrels and rivalries of others he took no part, except with a view to putting an end to them. It is said that the tribes living in Mecca and the territories around, tired of unending blood-feuds, resolved to found an association the purpose of which was to help victims of aggressive and unjust treatment. When the Holy Prophet heard of this, he gladly joined. Members of this association gave an undertaking in the following terms:

They will help those who were oppressed and will restore them their rights, as long as the last drop of water remained in the sea. And if they do not do so, they will compensate the victims out of their own belongings (*Raḍḍul-Unuf* by Imām Suhailī).

It seems that no other member of this association was ever called upon to discharge the undertaking solemnly entered into by members of this association. But opportunity came to the Holy Prophet when he had announced his Mission. His worst enemy was Abū Jahl, a chief of Mecca. He preached social boycott and public humiliation of the Prophet. About that time a person from outside came to Mecca. Money was due to him from Abū Jahl, but Abū Jahl refused to pay. He mentioned this to people in Mecca. Some young men, out of sheer mischief, suggested that he should approach the Prophet. They thought that the Prophet would refuse to do anything for fear of the general opposition to him and particularly for fear of the opposition of Abū Jahl. If he refused to help this man, he would be said to have broken his pledge to the association. If, on the other hand, he did not refuse and chose to approach Abū Jahl for the restitution of this loan, Abū Jahl was certain to turn him away with contempt. This man went to the Prophet and complained to him about Abū Jahl. The Prophet, hesitating not a minute, stood up, went with the man and knocked at Abū Jahl's door. Abū Jahl came out and saw that his creditor was standing with the Prophet. The Prophet mentioned the loan and suggested its payment. Abū Jahl was taken aback and, making no excuses, paid at once. When the other chiefs of Mecca heard of this they reproved Abū Jahl, telling him how weak and self-contradictory he had proved. He preached the social boycott of the Prophet, yet he himself accepted direction from the Prophet and paid a loan on his suggestion. In self-defence, Abū Jahl pleaded that any other person would have done the same. He told them that as he saw the Prophet standing at his door, he also saw two wild camels standing one on each side, ready to attack. We cannot say what this experience was. Was it a miraculous appearance designed to upset Abū Jahl or was it the awe-inspiring presence of the Prophet which produced this hallucination? A man hated and oppressed by a whole town had taken the courage to go alone to the leader of that town and demand the restitution of a loan. Maybe this very unexpected sight frightened Abū Jahl and for a moment made him forget what he had



sworn to do against the Prophet, and forced him to do as the Prophet suggested (*Hishām*).

### **Holy Prophet's Marriage to Khadījah**

When the Prophet was about twenty-five years old, his reputation for integrity and fellow-feeling had spread over the whole of the town. People would point admiring fingers at him and say, here was a man who could be trusted. This reputation reached the ears of a rich widow who approached the Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib, to let his nephew lead a trading caravan of hers to Syria. Abū Ṭālib mentioned this to the Prophet and the Prophet agreed. The expedition met with great success and brought unexpected profits. The rich widow, Khadījah, was convinced that the success of the caravan was due not only to the conditions of the market in Syria, but also to the integrity and efficiency of its leader. She interrogated her slave, Maisarah, on this subject, and Maisarah supported her view and told her that the honesty and sympathy with which this young leader of the caravan had managed her affairs would not be shown by many persons. Khadījah was much impressed by this account. She was forty years of age and had already been widowed twice. She sent a woman friend of hers to the Prophet to find out whether he would be persuaded to marry her. This woman went to the Prophet and asked why he had not married. The Prophet replied he was not rich enough to do so. The visitor suggested whether he would agree, if a rich and respectable woman were found whom he could marry. The Prophet asked who this woman could be, and the visitor said she was Khadījah. The Prophet apologized, saying that Khadījah was too highly placed for him. The visitor undertook to deal with all difficulties. In that case, said the Prophet, there was nothing for him to say but to agree. Khadījah then sent a message to the Prophet's uncle. Marriage between the Prophet and Khadījah was settled and solemnized. A poor man orphaned in childhood had his first peep into prosperity. He became rich. But the use he made of his riches is an object lesson to all mankind. After the marriage Khadījah felt that she was rich and he was poor and that this inequality between them would not make for happiness. So she proposed to make over her property and her slaves to the Prophet. The Prophet, making sure that Khadījah was in earnest, declared that as soon as he had any of Khadījah's slaves, he would set them free. And he did so. Moreover, the greater part of the property which he received from Khadījah he distributed among the poor. Among the slaves whom he thus set free was one Zaid. He appeared to be more intelligent and more alert than others. He belonged to a respectable family, had been kidnapped as a child and sold from place to place until he reached Mecca.

Young Zaid, newly freed, saw at once that it was better to sacrifice freedom for the sake of slavery to the Prophet. When the Prophet set the slaves free, Zaid refused to be freed and asked leave to continue to live with the Prophet. He did so, and as time went on his attachment to the Prophet grew. But in the meantime Zaid's father and his uncle were on his track and they ultimately heard that he was in Mecca. In Mecca they traced him in the house of the Prophet. Coming to the Prophet, they asked for the liberty of Zaid and offered to pay as much ransom as the Prophet should demand. The Prophet said that Zaid was free and could go with them as he liked. He sent for Zaid and showed him his father and uncle. After the parties had met and dried their tears, Zaid's father told him that he had been freed by his kind Master and, as his mother was much afflicted by the separation, he had better return home. Zaid replied, "Father! who does not love his parents? My heart is full of love for you and mother. But I love this man Muḥammad so much that I cannot think of living elsewhere than with him. I have met you and I am glad. But separation from Muḥammad I cannot endure." Zaid's father and his uncle did their utmost to persuade Zaid to return home with them but Zaid did not agree. Upon this the Holy Prophet said, "Zaid was a freedman already, but from today he will be my son." Seeing this affection between Zaid and the Prophet, Zaid's father and uncle went back and Zaid remained with the Prophet (*Hishām*).

### **The Prophet Receives His First Revelation**

When the Prophet was over thirty years of age, love of God and love of His worship began to possess him more and more. Revolting against the mischiefs, misdeeds and the many vices of the people of Mecca, he chose a spot two or three miles away for his meditations. This was on top of a hill, a sort of cave shaped out of stone. His wife Khadijah would prepare food enough for several days, and with this he would repair to the cave Ḥirā. In the cave he would worship God day and night. When he was forty years of age, he saw a vision. It was in this very cave. He saw someone commanding him to recite.

The Prophet said in reply he did not know what or how to recite. The figure insisted and at last made the Prophet recite the following verses:

Recite thou in the name of thy Lord Who created, created man from a clot of blood. Recite! And thy Lord is the Most Beneficent, Who taught man by the pen, taught man what he knew not (96:2-6).

These verses, the first ever revealed to the Prophet, became part of the Quran as did other verses which were revealed later. They have tremendous meaning. They command the Prophet to stand up and be ready to proclaim the

name of the One God, the One Creator—of the Prophet and of all others—Who has made man and sowed the seed of His own love and that of fellow men in his nature. The Prophet was commanded to proclaim the Message of this God, and was promised help and protection by Him in the proclamation of this Message. The verses foretold a time when the world would be taught all manner of knowledge through the instrumentality of the pen, and would be taught things never heard of before. The verses constitute an epitome of the Quran. Whatever the Prophet was to be taught in later revelations is contained in embryo in these verses. The foundation was laid in them of a great and heretofore unknown advance in the spiritual progress of man. The meaning and explanation of these verses will be found in their place in this Commentary. We refer to them here because their revelation constitutes a great occasion in the life of the Prophet. When the Prophet received this revelation, he was overwhelmed by the fear of the responsibility which God had decided to place on his shoulders. Any other person in his place would have been filled with pride—he would have felt that he had become great. The Prophet was different. He could achieve great things but could take no pride in his achievement. After this great experience he reached home greatly agitated, his face drawn. On Khadijah's enquiry, he narrated the whole experience to her and summed up his fears, saying, "Weak man that I am, how can I carry the responsibility which God proposes to put on my shoulders." Khadijah replied at once:

God is witness, He has not sent you this Word that you should fail and prove unworthy, that He should then give you up. How can God do such a thing, while you are kind and considerate to your relations, help the poor and the forlorn and bear their burdens? You are restoring the virtues which had disappeared from our country. You treat guests with honour and help those who are in distress. Can you be subjected by God to any trial? (*Bukhārī*)

Having said this, Khadijah took the Prophet to her cousin, Waraqah bin Naufal, a Christian. When he heard the account, Waraqah said:

"The angel who descended on Moses, I am sure, has descended on you" (*Bukhārī*).

### **First Converts**

Waraqah evidently referred to the prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:18. When the news reached Zaid, the Prophet's freed slave, now about thirty years of age, and his cousin, 'Alī, about eleven, they both declared their faith in him. Abū Bakr, a friend of his childhood, was out of town. As he returned, he began to hear of this new experience which the Prophet had had. He was told

that his friend had gone mad and had begun to say that angels brought him messages from God. Abū Bakr trusted the Prophet completely. He did not doubt for a minute that the Prophet must be right—he had known him to be both sane and sincere. He knocked at the Prophet's door and on admission into his company, asked him what had happened. The Prophet, fearing lest Abū Bakr should misunderstand, began a long explanation. Abū Bakr stopped the Prophet from doing so, and insisted that all he wanted to know was whether an angel had really descended upon him from God and had given him a Message. The Prophet wanted to explain again, but Abū Bakr said he wanted to hear no explanation. He wanted only an answer to the question whether he had had a Message from God. The Prophet said, "Yes" and Abū Bakr at once declared his faith. Having declared his faith, he said, argument would have detracted from the value of his faith. He had known the Prophet long and intimately. He could not doubt him, and he wanted no argument to be convinced of his truth. This small group of the faithful then were the first believers of Islam: a woman full of years, an eleven-year-old boy, a freed slave living among strangers, a young friend and the Prophet himself. This was the party which made the silent resolve to spread the light of God all over the world. When the people and their leaders heard of this, they laughed and declared that these men had gone mad. There was nothing to fear and nothing to worry about. But as time went on, the truth began to dawn and as the Prophet Isaiah (28:13) said long ago, precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; began to descend upon the Prophet.

### **The Faithful Persecuted**

God began to talk to Muḥammad in "another tongue". The youth of the country began to wonder. Those in search of truth became excited. Out of scorn and derision began to grow approval and admiration. Slaves, young men, and hapless women began to collect around the Prophet. In his Message and in his teaching there was hope for the degraded, the depressed and the young. Women thought the time for the restoration of their rights was near. Slaves thought the day of their liberation had come and young men thought the avenues of progress were going to be thrown open to them. When derision began to change into approval and indifference into attachment, the chiefs of Mecca and the officials began to take fright. They assembled and took counsel. They decided that derision was no method to deal with this menace. A more serious remedy had to be applied. The new influence had to be put down by force. It was decided that persecution and some form of boycott must be instituted. Practical steps were soon taken, and Mecca was pitched against Islam in a serious conflict. The Prophet and his small following were no

longer considered mad, but a growing influence which, if allowed to grow unimpeded, would prove a danger to the faith, prestige, customs and traditions of Mecca. Islam threatened to pull down and rebuild the old structure of Meccan society, to create a new heaven and a new earth, the coming of which must mean the disappearance of the old heaven of Arabia and its old heart. Meccans could no longer laugh at Islam. It was a question now of life and death for them. Islam was a challenge and Mecca accepted the challenge, as enemies of Prophets had always accepted the challenge of their Prophets. They decided not to meet argument by argument but to draw the sword and put down the dangerous teaching by force; not to match the good example of the Prophet and his followers by their own, nor to reply to kind words in kind, but to maltreat the innocent and to abuse those who spoke kindly. Once again in the world a conflict started between belief and disbelief; the forces of Satan declared war on the angels. The faithful, still a handful, had no power to resist the onslaughts and violence of the disbelievers. A most cruel campaign began. Women were butchered shamelessly. Men were slaughtered. The slaves who had declared their faith in the Prophet were dragged over burning sands and stones. Their skins became hardened like those of animals. A long time after, when Islam had become established far and near, one of these early converts named Khabbāb bin Al-Arat had his body exposed. His friends saw his skin hardened like an animal's and asked him why it was so. Khabbāb laughed and said it was nothing; only a memory of those early days when slaves converted to Islam were dragged through the streets of Mecca over hard and hot sands and stones (*Musnad*, Vol. 5, p. 110).

The slaves who believed came from all communities. Bilāl was an African, Ṣuhaib a Greek. They belonged to different faiths. Jabr and Ṣuhaib were Christians, Bilāl and 'Ammār, idol-worshippers. Bilāl was made to lie on hot sand, loaded with stones, and boys were made to dance on his chest, and his master, Umayyah bin Khalf, tortured him thus and then asked him to renounce Allah and the Prophet and sing the praises of the Meccan gods, Lāt and 'Uzzā. Bilāl only said, *Aḥad, Aḥad...* (God is One).

Exasperated, Umayyah handed Bilāl over to street boys, asking them to put a cord round his neck and drag him through the town over sharp stones. Bilāl's body bled, but he went on muttering, *Aḥad, Aḥad...* Later, when Muslims settled in Medina and were able to live and worship in comparative peace, the Holy Prophet appointed Bilāl a Mu'adhdhin, the official who calls the worshippers to prayers. Being an African, Bilāl missed the (h), in the Arabic *Ashhadu* (I bear witness). Medinite believers laughed at his defective pronunciation, but the Prophet rebuked them and told them how dear Bilāl was to God for the stout faith he showed under Meccan tortures. Abū Bakr paid ransom for Bilāl and many other slaves and secured their release. Among

them was Ṣuhaib, a prosperous merchant, whom the Quraish continued to belabour even after his release. When the Holy Prophet left Mecca to settle down in Medina, Ṣuhaib wanted to go with him. But the Meccans stopped him. He could not take away from Mecca, they said, the wealth he had earned in Mecca. Ṣuhaib offered to surrender all his property and earnings and asked whether they would then let him go. The Meccans accepted the arrangement. Ṣuhaib reached Medina empty-handed and saw the Prophet, who heard him and congratulated him, saying, "This was the best bargain of your life."

Most of these slave-converts remained steadfast in outer as well as inner professions of faith. But some were weak. Once the Holy Prophet found ‘Ammār groaning with pain and drying his tears. Approached by the Prophet, ‘Ammār said he had been beaten and compelled to recant. The Prophet asked him, "But did you believe at heart?" ‘Ammār declared that he did, and the Prophet said that God would forgive his weakness.

‘Ammār’s father, Yāsir, and his mother, Samiyyah, also were tormented by disbelievers. On one such occasion the Prophet happened to pass by. Filled with emotion, he said, "Family of Yāsir, bear up patiently, for God has prepared for you a Paradise." The prophetic words were soon fulfilled. Yāsir succumbed to the tortures, and a little later Abū Jahl murdered his aged wife, Samiyyah, with a spear.

Zinbīrah, a woman slave, lost her eyes under the cruel treatment of disbelievers.

Abū Fukaih, Ṣafwān bin Umayyah’s slave, was laid on hot sand while over his chest were placed heavy and hot stones, under pain of which his tongue would drop out.

Other slaves were mishandled in similar ways.

These cruelties were beyond endurance. But early believers bore them because their hearts were made stout by assurances received daily from God. The Quran descended on the Prophet, but the reassuring voice of God descended on all believers. Were not this so, the faithful could not have withstood the cruelties to which they were subjected. Abandoned by fellow-men, friends and relations, they had none but God with them, and they cared not whether they had anyone else. Because of Him, the cruelties seemed nothing, abuse sounded like [well-wishing] prayers and stones seemed like velvet.

The free citizens who believed were not less cruelly treated. Their elders and chiefs tormented them in different ways. ‘Uthmān was a man of forty, and prosperous. Yet when the Quraish resolved upon general persecution of Muslims, his uncle, Ḥakam, tied him up and beat him. Zubair bin al-‘Awwām, a brave young lad who later became a great Muslim general, was

wrapped up in a mat by his uncle, smoked from underneath and tortured by suffocation. But he would not recant. He had found Truth and would not give it up.

Abū Dharr, of the tribe of Ghaffār, heard of the Prophet and went to Mecca to investigate. The Meccans dissuaded him, saying that they knew Muḥammad well and that his Movement was only a selfish design. Abū Dharr was not impressed; so he went to the Prophet, heard the Message of Islam straight from him and was converted. Abū Dharr asked if he could keep his faith secret from his tribe. The Prophet said he could do so for a few days. But as he passed through the streets of Mecca he heard a party of Meccan chiefs abuse the Holy Prophet and make vile attacks. No longer could he keep his faith secret, and he declared at once: "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and that there is no one like Allah; and Muḥammad is His Servant and Prophet." This cry raised in an assembly of disbelievers seemed to them an effrontery. They rose in wrath and belaboured him until he fell down senseless. The Prophet's uncle 'Abbās, not a convert yet, passed by and began to remonstrate on behalf of the victim. "Your food caravans pass through Abū Dharr's tribe," he said, "and angered at your treatment, his people can starve you to death." The following day Abū Dharr stayed at home. But the day after he went again to the same assembly and found them abusing the Holy Prophet as before. He went to the Ka'bah and found people doing the same. He could not restrain himself, stood up and made a loud declaration of his faith. Again he was severely handled. The same thing happened a third time, and Abū Dharr went back to his tribe.

The Holy Prophet himself was no exception to the cruel treatment meted out to the faithful. On one occasion he was in prayer. A party of disbelievers put a mantle round his neck and dragged him; his eyes seemed protruded. Abū Bakr happened to come and rescued him, saying, "You seek to kill him, because he says, God is his Master?" On another occasion he lay prostrate in prayer and they laid the entrails of a camel on his back. He could not rise until the weight was removed. On yet another occasion he was passing through a street and a group of street boys followed him. They went on slapping his neck and telling the people that he called himself a Prophet. Such was the hatred and enmity against him, and such was his helplessness.

The Prophet's house was stoned from surrounding houses. Garbage and the remains of slaughtered animals were thrown into his kitchen. On many occasions dust was thrown on him while he was praying so that he had to retire to a safe spot for his public prayers.

These cruelties, perpetrated against a weak and innocent group and their honest, well-meaning but helpless Leader, were not wasted, however. Decent men saw all this and became drawn to Islam. The Prophet was once resting on

Şafā, a hill near the Ka‘bah. The Meccan chief Abū Jahl, the Prophet’s arch-enemy, passed by and began to pour vile abuse on him. The Prophet said nothing and went home. A woman-slave of his household was a witness to this distressing scene. Ḥamzah, the Prophet’s uncle, a brave man feared by all his townsmen, returned home from a hunt in the jungle and entered the house proudly, his bow hung on his shoulder. The woman-slave had not forgotten the morning scene. She was disgusted to see Ḥamzah walk home thus. She taunted him, saying that he thought himself brave and went about armed but knew not what Abū Jahl had done to his innocent nephew in the morning. Ḥamzah heard an account of the morning incident. Though not a believer, he possessed nobility of character. He may have been impressed by the Prophet’s Message, but not to the extent of joining openly. When he heard of this wanton attack by Abū Jahl, he could not hold back. His hesitancy about the new Message was gone. He began to feel that so far he had been too casual about it. He made straight for the Ka‘bah, where the chiefs of Mecca were wont to meet and confer. He took his bow and struck Abū Jahl hard. "Count me from today a follower of Muḥammad," he said. "You abused him this morning because he would say nothing. If you are brave, come out and fight me." Abū Jahl was dumbfounded. His friends rose to help but, afraid of Ḥamzah and his tribe, Abū Jahl stopped them, thinking an open fight would cost too dearly. He was really to blame, he said, about the morning incident (*Hishām* and *Ṭabarī*).

### **The Message of Islam**

Opposition continued to mount. At the same time the Prophet and his followers were doing all they could to make plain to the Meccans the Message of Islam. It was a many-sided Message and of great ultimate significance, not only for Arabs but for the whole world. It was a Message from God. It said:

The Creator of the world is One. None else is worthy of worship. The Prophets have ever believed Him to be One, and taught their followers so. Meccans should give up all images and idols. Did they not see that the idols could not even remove the flies which dropped on the offerings laid at their feet? If they were attacked they could not repel. If they had a question put to them, they could not answer. If they were asked for help, they could do nothing. But the One God helped those who asked for His help, answered those who addressed Him in prayer, subjugated His enemies, and raised those who abased themselves before Him. When light came from Him, it illumined His devotees. Why then did the Meccans neglect Him and turn to lifeless images and idols and waste their lives? Did they not see that their want of faith in



the One True God had made them utterly superstitious and incompetent? They had no idea of what was clean and what was unclean, of right and wrong. They did not honour their mothers. They treated savagely their sisters and daughters, and denied them their due. They did not treat their wives well. They tormented widows, exploited orphans, the poor and the weak, and sought to build their prosperity on the ruins of others. Of lying and cheating they were not ashamed, nor of burgling and loot. Gambling and drinking were their delight. For culture and national advance they did not care. How long were they going to ignore the One True God, and continue to lose and lose, and suffer and suffer? Had they not better reform? Had they not better give up all forms of exploitation of one another, restore rights to whom they were due, spend their wealth on national needs and on improving the lot of the poor and the weak, treat orphans as a trust and regard their protection as a duty, support widows and establish and encourage good works in the whole community, cultivate not merely justice and equity, but compassion and grace? Life in this world should be productive of good.

"Leave good works behind", the Message further said, "that they may grow and bear fruit after you are gone. There is virtue in giving to others, not in receiving from them. Learn to surrender that you may be nearer to your God. Practise self-denial for the sake of your fellow men, that you may multiply your credit with God. True, the Muslims are weak, but do not go after their weakness. Truth will triumph. This is the decree of Heaven. Through the Prophet a new measure and a new criterion of good and evil, of right and wrong, will be set up in the world. Justice and mercy will reign. No constraint will be allowed in the matter of religion, and no interference. The cruelties to which women and slaves have been subjected will be obliterated. The Kingdom of God will be instituted in place of the kingdom of Satan."

When this Message was preached to the people of Mecca and the well-meaning and reflective among them began to be impressed by it. The elders of Mecca took a serious view of what was happening. They went in a deputation to the Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib, and addressed him thus:

You are one of our chiefs and for your sake we have so far spared your nephew, Muḥammad. The time has come, however, when we should put an end to this national crisis, this conflict, in our midst. We ask and demand that he should desist from saying anything against our idols. Let him proclaim that God is One, but let him not say anything against our idols. If he agrees to this, our conflict and controversy with him

will be over. We urge you to persuade him. But if you are unable to do so, then one of two things must happen. Either you will have to give up your nephew, or we, your people, will give you up (*Hishām*).

Abū Ṭālib was confronted with a hard choice. To give up his nephew was hard. Equally hard was it to be disowned by his people. Arabs had little in the way of money. Their prestige lay in their leadership. They lived for their people, and their people for them. Abū Ṭālib was much upset. He sent for the Prophet and explained to him the demand made by the elders of Mecca. "If you do not agree," he said with tears in his eyes, "then either I have to give you up or my people will give me up." The Prophet was in evident sympathy with his uncle. Tears came to his eyes and he said:

I ask you not to give up your people. I ask you not to stand by me. Instead, you may give me up and stand by your people. But the One and Only God is my witness when I say that even if they were to place the sun on my right and the moon on my left, I would not desist from preaching the truth of the One God. I must go on doing so until I die. You can choose your own pleasure (*Hishām* and *Zurqānī*).

This reply, firm, straight and sincere, opened the eyes of Abū Ṭālib. He sank deep in thought. Though he did not have the courage to believe, he thought he was lucky to have lived to see this grand demonstration of belief and regard for duty. Turning to the Prophet, he said:

My nephew, go your way. Do your duty. Let my people give me up. I am with you (*Hishām*).

### **Migration to Abyssinia**

When tyranny reached its extreme limit the Prophet assembled his followers, and pointing to the west told them of a land across the sea where men were not murdered because of a change of faith, where they could worship God unmolested, and where there was a just king. Let them go there; maybe the change would bring them relief. A party of Muslim men, women and children, acting on this suggestion, went to Abyssinia. The migration was on a small scale and very pathetic. The Arabs regarded themselves as keepers of the Ka'bah, and so they were. To leave Mecca was for them a great wrench, and no Arab could think of doing so unless living in Mecca had become absolutely impossible. Nor were the Meccans prepared to tolerate such a movement. They would not let their victims escape and have the least chance to live elsewhere. The party, therefore, had to keep its preparations for the journey a close secret and to depart without even saying good-bye to their friends and relations. Their departure, however, became known to some and

did not fail to impress them. ‘Umar, subsequently the Second *Khalīfah* of Islam, was still a disbeliever, a bitter enemy and persecutor of Muslims. By sheer chance, he met some members of this party. One of these was a woman, Ummi ‘Abdullāh. When ‘Umar saw household effects packed up and loaded on animals, he understood at once that it was a party leaving Mecca to take refuge elsewhere. "Are you going?" he asked. "Yes, God is our witness," replied Ummi ‘Abdullāh. "We go to another land, because you treat us most cruelly here. We will not return now until Allah pleases to make it easy for us." ‘Umar was impressed and said, "God be with you." There was emotion in his voice. This silent scene had upset him. When the Meccans got to know of it, they sent a party in chase. This party went as far as the sea but found that the Muslims had already embarked. Not being able to overtake them, they decided to send a delegation to Abyssinia to excite the king against the refugees and to persuade him to hand them over again to Meccans. One of the delegates was ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ, who later joined Islam and conquered Egypt. The delegation went to Abyssinia, met the king and intrigued with his court. But the king proved very firm and, in spite of the pressure which the Meccan delegation and his own courtiers were able to put upon him, he refused to hand over the Muslim refugees to their persecutors. The delegation returned disappointed, but in Mecca they soon thought of another plan to force the return of Muslims from Abyssinia. Among the caravans going to Abyssinia they set afloat the rumour that all Mecca had accepted Islam. When the rumour reached Abyssinia, many Muslim refugees joyfully returned to Mecca but found on arrival that the rumour which had reached them was a fabrication. Some Muslims went back again to Abyssinia but some decided to stay. Among the latter was ‘Uthmān bin Maz‘ūn, son of a leading Meccan chief. ‘Uthmān received protection from a friend of his father, Walīd bin Mughīrah, and began to live in peace. But he saw that other Muslims continued to suffer brutal persecution. It made him very unhappy. He went to Walīd and renounced his protection. He felt he should not have such protection while other Muslims continued to suffer. Walīd announced this to the Meccans.

One day, Labīd, poet-laureate of Arabia, sat among the chiefs of Mecca, reciting his verse. He read a line which meant that all graces must ultimately come to an end. ‘Uthmān boldly contradicted him and said, "The graces of Paradise will be everlasting." Labīd, not used to such contradictions, lost his temper and said, "Quraish, your guests were not insulted like this before. Whence has this fashion begun?" To appease Labīd, a man from among the audience rose and said, "Go on and take no notice of this fool". ‘Uthmān bin Maz‘ūn insisted that he had said nothing foolish. This exasperated the Quraishite, who sprang upon ‘Uthmān and gave him a sharp blow, knocking out an eye. Walīd was present at the scene. He was a close friend of

‘Uthmān’s father. He could not endure such treatment of his deceased friend’s son. But ‘Uthmān was no longer under his formal protection and Arab custom now forbade him to take sides. So he could do nothing. Half in anger, half in anguish he turned to ‘Uthmān, and said, "Son of my friend, you would have saved your eye, had you not renounced my protection. You have to thank yourself for it."

‘Uthmān replied,

I have longed for this. I lament not over the loss of one eye, because the other waits for the same fate. Remember, while the Prophet suffers, we want no peace (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. I, p. 348).

### **‘Umar Accepts Islam**

About this time, another very important event took place. ‘Umar, who later became the Second *Khalīfah* of Islam, was still one of the fiercest and the most feared enemies of Islam. He felt that no effective step had yet been taken against the new Movement and decided to put an end to the Prophet’s life. He took his sword and set out. A friend was puzzled to see him going and asked where he was going and with what intent. "To kill Muḥammad," said ‘Umar.

"But would you be safe from his tribe after this? And do you really know how things are going? Do you know that your sister and her husband have joined Islam?"

It came like a bolt from the blue and greatly upset ‘Umar. He decided to go and have done with his sister and her husband first. As he reached their house he heard a recitation going on inside. The voice was that of Khabbāb who was teaching them the Holy Book. ‘Umar entered the house swiftly. Khabbāb, alarmed by the hurried steps, had already hid himself. ‘Umar’s sister, Fāṭimah, put away the leaves of the Quran. Confronting her and her husband, ‘Umar said, "I hear you have renounced your own faith," and, saying this, he raised his hand to strike her husband, who was incidentally his own cousin. Fāṭimah threw herself between ‘Umar and her husband; so ‘Umar’s hand fell on Fāṭimah’s face and struck her on the nose, from which blood flowed freely. The blow made Fāṭimah all the braver. She said, "Yes, we are Muslims now and shall remain so; do what you may." ‘Umar was a brave man, though rough. His sister’s face, dyed red by his own hand, filled him with remorse. Soon he was a changed man. He asked to be shown those leaves of the Quran they were reading from. Fāṭimah refused lest he should tear them up and throw them away. ‘Umar promised not to do so. But, said Fāṭimah, he was not clean. ‘Umar offered to have a bath. Clean and cooled, he took the leaves of the Quran in his hand. They contained a portion of the chapter

Ṭā Hā. And he came upon the verses:

Verily I am Allah; there is no God beside Me. So serve Me, and observe prayer for My remembrance. Surely the Hour is coming, and I am going to manifest it, that every soul may be recompensed for its endeavour (20:15, 16).

The firm assertion of God's existence, the clear promise that Islam would soon establish genuine worship in place of the customary one current in Mecca—these and a host of other associated ideas must have moved 'Umar. He could contain himself no longer. Faith welled up in his heart and he said, "How wonderful, how inspiring!" Khabbāb came out of his hiding, and said, "God is my witness, only yesterday I heard the Prophet pray for the conversion of 'Umar or 'Amr Ibn Hishām. Your change is the result of that prayer." 'Umar's mind was made up. He asked where the Prophet was and made straight for him at Dar-e-Ārqam, his bare sword still in his hand. As he knocked at the door, the Prophet's Companions could see 'Umar through the crevices. They feared lest he should have some evil design. But the Prophet said, "Let him come in." 'Umar entered, sword in hand. "What brings you?" inquired the Prophet. "Prophet of God," said 'Umar, "I am here to become a Muslim." *Allāhu Akbar*, cried the Prophet. *Allāhu Akbar*, cried the Companions. The hills around Mecca echoed the cries. News of the conversion spread like wild fire and henceforward 'Umar, the much-feared persecutor of Islam, himself began to be persecuted along with other Muslims. But 'Umar had changed. He delighted now in suffering as he had delighted before in inflicting suffering. He went about Mecca, a much harassed person.

### **Persecution Intensifies**

Persecution became more and more serious and unbearable. Many Muslims had already left Mecca. Those who stayed behind had to suffer more than ever before. But Muslims swerved not a bit from the path they had chosen. Their hearts were as stout as ever, their faith as steadfast. Their devotion to the One God was on the increase and so was their hatred for the national idols of Mecca. The conflict had become more serious than ever. The Meccans convened another big meeting. At this they resolved on an all-out boycott of the Muslims: The Meccans were to have no normal dealings with Muslims. They were neither to buy from them, nor to sell them anything. The Prophet, his family and a number of relations who, though not Muslims, still stood by him, were compelled to take shelter in a lonely place, a possession of Abū Ṭālib. Without money, without means and without reserves, the Prophet's family and relations suffered untold hardships under this blockade. For three years there was no slackening of it. Then at last, five decent members of the

enemy revolted against these conditions. They went to the blockaded family, offered to annul the boycott, and asked the family to come out. Abū Ṭālib came out and reproved his people. The revolt of the five became known all over Mecca, but good feeling asserted itself again, and Meccans decided they must cancel the savage boycott. The boycott was over, but not its consequences. In a few days the Prophet's faithful wife, Khadījah, met her death, and a month later his uncle, Abū Ṭālib.

The Holy Prophet had now lost the companionship and support of Khadījah, and he and the Muslims had lost the good offices of Abū Ṭālib. Their passing away naturally also resulted in the loss of some general sympathy. Abū Lahab, another uncle of the Prophet, seemed ready at first to side with the Prophet. The shock of his brother's death and regard for his dying wish were still fresh in his mind. But the Meccans soon succeeded in antagonizing him. They made use of the usual appeals. The Prophet taught that disbelief in the Oneness of God was an offence, punishable in the Hereafter; his teaching contradicted everything they had learnt from their forefathers, and so on. Abū Lahab decided to oppose the Prophet more than ever. Relations between Muslims and Meccans had become strained. A three-year boycott and blockade had enlarged the gulf between them. Meeting and preaching seemed impossible. The Prophet did not mind the ill-treatment and the persecution; these were nothing so long as he had the chance to meet and address people. But now it seemed that he had no such chance in Mecca. General antagonism apart, the Prophet now found it impossible to appear in any street or public place. If he did, they threw dust at him and sent him back to his house. Once he returned home, his head covered with dust. A daughter wept as she removed the dust. The Prophet told her not to weep for God was with him. Ill-treatment did not upset the Prophet. He even welcomed it as evidence of interest in his Message. One day, for instance, the Meccans by a general intrigue said nothing to him nor did they ill-treat him in any way. The Prophet retired home disappointed, until the reassuring voice of God made him go to his people again.

### **The Prophet Goes to Ṭā'if**

It seemed that in Mecca now nobody would listen to him and this made him sad. He felt he was stagnating. So he decided to turn elsewhere for the preaching of his Message, and he chose Ṭā'if, a small town about sixty miles to the south-east of Mecca and famed for its fruit and its agriculture. The Prophet's decision was in keeping with the traditions of all Prophets. Moses turned now to the Pharaoh, now to Israel, and now to Midian. Jesus, similarly, turned now to Galilee, now to places across the Jordan, and now to Jerusalem. So the Holy Prophet of Islam, finding that Meccans would ill-treat

but not listen, turned to Ṭā'if. In polytheistic beliefs and practices Ṭā'if was not behind Mecca. The idols to be found in the Ka'bah were not the only, nor the only important, idols in Arabia. One important idol, al-Lāt, was to be found in Ṭā'if; because of it, Ṭā'if also was a centre of pilgrimage. The inhabitants of Ṭā'if were connected with those of Mecca by ties of blood; and many green spots between Ṭā'if and Mecca were owned by Meccans. On arrival at Ṭā'if, the Prophet had visits from its chiefs but none seemed willing to accept the Message. The rank and file obeyed their leaders and dismissed the teaching with contempt. This was not unusual. People immersed in worldly affairs always regard such a Message as something of an interference and even an offence. Because the Message is without visible support—such as numbers or arms—they also feel they can dismiss it with contempt. The Prophet was no exception. Reports of him had already reached Ṭā'if, and here he now was, without arms or following, a lone individual with only one companion, Zaid. The towns folk thought him a nuisance which should be ended, if only to please their chiefs. They set vagabonds of the town and street boys at him who pelted him with stones and drove him out of the town. Zaid was wounded and the Prophet began to bleed profusely. But the pursuit continued until this defenceless party of two was several miles out of Ṭā'if. The Prophet was sorely grieved and dejected when an angel descended upon him and asked if he would like his persecutors to be destroyed. "No," said the Prophet. "I hope that of these very tormentors would be born those who would worship the One True God" (*Bukhārī, Kitāb Bad'ul-Khalq*).

Exhausted and dejected, he stopped at a vineyard owned by two Meccans who happened to be present. They were among his persecutors at Mecca, but on this occasion they became sympathetic. Was it because a Meccan had been ill-treated by the people of Ṭā'if, or was it because a spark of human kindness suddenly glowed in their hearts? They sent to the Prophet a tray full of grapes with a Christian slave, 'Addās by name and belonging to Nineveh. 'Addās presented the tray to the Prophet and his companion. While he looked wistfully at them, he became more curious than ever when he heard the Prophet say, "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful." His Christian background was enlivened and he felt he was in the presence of a Hebrew Prophet. The Prophet asked him where he belonged and 'Addās said Nineveh, upon which the Prophet said, "Jonah, son of Amittai, who belonged to Nineveh, was a holy man, a Prophet like me." The Prophet also told 'Addās of his own Message. 'Addās felt charmed and believed at once. He embraced the Prophet with tears in his eyes and started kissing his head, hands and feet. The meeting over, the Prophet turned again to Allah and said:

Allah, I submit my plaint to Thee. I am weak, and without means. My people look down upon me. Thou art Lord of the weak and the poor and Thou art my Lord. To whom wilt Thou abandon me—to strangers who push me about or to the enemy who oppresses me in my own town? If Thou art not angered at me, I care not for my enemy. Thy mercy be with me. I seek refuge in the light of Thy face. It is Thou Who canst drive away darkness from the world and give peace to all, here and hereafter. Let not Thy anger and Thy wrath descend on me. Thou art never angry except when Thou art pleased soon after. And there is no power and no refuge except with Thee (*Hishām* and *Ṭabarī*).

Having said this prayer, he set back for Mecca. He stopped en route at Nakhlah for a few days and set out again. According to Meccan tradition he was no longer a citizen of Mecca. He had left it because he thought it hostile and could not return to it except with the permission of the Meccans. Accordingly, he sent word to Muṭ'im bin 'Adī—a Meccan chief, to ask if Meccans would permit him to come back. Muṭ'im, though as bitter an enemy as any other, possessed nobility of heart. He collected his sons and relatives. Arming themselves, they went to the Ka'bah. Standing in the courtyard he announced he was permitting the Prophet to return. The Prophet then returned, and made a circuit of the Ka'bah. Muṭ'im, his sons and relatives, with swords unsheathed, then escorted the Prophet to his house. It was not protection in the customary Arabian sense which had been extended to the Prophet. The Prophet continued to suffer and Muṭ'im did not shield him further. Muṭ'im's act amounted to a mere declaration of formal permission for the Prophet to return.

The Prophet's journey to Ṭā'if has extorted praise even from the enemies of Islam. Sir William Muir, in his biography of the Prophet, writes (speaking of the journey to Ṭā'if):

There is something lofty and heroic in this journey of Mahomet to Ṭāyif; a solitary man, despised and rejected by his own people, going boldly forth in the name of God, like Jonah to Nineveh, and summoning an idolatrous city to repent and to support his mission. It sheds a strong light on the intensity of his belief in the divine origin of his calling (*The Life of Mahomet* by Sir W. Muir, 1923 edition, pp. 112-113).

Mecca returned to its old hostility. The Prophet's home town again became hell for him. But he continued to tell people of his Message. The formula, "God is One", began to be heard here and there. With love and regard, and with a sense of fellow-feeling, the Prophet persisted in the exposition of his Message. People turned away but he addressed them again and again. He made his proclamation, whether the people cared or not, and



persistence seemed to pay. The handful of Muslims who had returned from Abyssinia and had decided to stay, preached secretly to their friends, neighbours and relations. Some of these were persuaded to declare themselves openly and to share the sufferings of other Muslims. But many, though persuaded at heart, did not have the courage to confess openly; they waited for the kingdom of God to come to the earth.

In the meantime revelations received by the Prophet began to hint at the near possibility of migration from Mecca. Some idea of the place they were to migrate to was also given to him. It was a town of wells and date-groves. He thought of Yamāmah. But soon the thought was dismissed. He then waited in the assurance that whatever place they were destined to go to would certainly become the cradle of Islam.

### **Islam Spreads to Medina**

The annual *Hajj* drew near, and from all parts of Arabia pilgrims began to arrive in Mecca. The Prophet went wherever he found a group of people, expounded to them the idea of One God and told them to give up excesses of all kinds and prepare for the Kingdom of God. Some listened and became interested. Some wished to listen but were sent away by the Meccans. Some who had already made up their minds, stopped to ridicule. The Prophet was in the valley of Minā when he saw a group of six or seven people. He found that they belonged to the Khazraj tribe, one in alliance with the Jews. He asked them if they would listen to what he had to say. They had heard of him and were interested; so they agreed. The Prophet spent sometime telling them that the Kingdom of God was at hand, that idols were going to disappear, that the idea of One God was due to triumph, and piety and purity were once again going to rule. Would they not, in Medina, welcome the Message? The group became much impressed. They accepted the Message and promised, on their return to Medina, to confer with others and report next year whether Medina would be willing to receive Muslim refugees from Mecca. They returned and conferred with their friends and relations. There were, at the time, two Arab and three Jewish tribes at Medina. The Arab tribes were the Aus and the Khazraj and the Jewish tribes the Banū Quraizah, the Banū Naḍīr, and the Banū Qainuqā'. The Aus and the Khazraj were at war. The Quraizah and the Naḍīr were in alliance with the Aus and the Qainuqā' with the Khazraj. Tired of unending warfare, they were inclined to peace. At last they agreed to acknowledge the Khazraj Chief, 'Abdullāh bin Ubayy bin Salūl, as King of Medina. From the Jews, the Aus and the Khazraj had heard of prophecies in the Bible. They had heard Jewish tales of the lost glory of Israel and of the advent of a Prophet "like unto Moses". This advent was near at hand, the Jews used to say. It was to mark the return to power of Israel and the destruction of

their enemies. When the people of Medina heard of the Prophet, they became impressed and began to ask if this Meccan Prophet was not the Prophet they had heard of from the Jews. Many young men readily believed. At the next *Hajj* twelve men from Medina came to Mecca to join the Prophet. Ten of these belonged to the Khazraj and two to the Aus tribe. They met the Prophet in the valley of Minā and, holding the Prophet's hand, solemnly declared their belief in the Oneness of God and their resolve to abstain from all common evils, from infanticide, and from making false accusations against one another. They also resolved to obey the Prophet in all good things. When they returned to Medina, they started telling others of their new faith. Zeal increased. Idols were taken out of their niches and thrown on the streets. Those who used to bow before images began to hold their heads high. They resolved to bow to none except the One God. The Jews wondered. Centuries of friendship, exposition and debate had failed to produce the change which this Meccan teacher had produced in a few days. The people of Medina would go to the few Muslims in their midst and make inquiries about Islam. But the few Muslims could not cope with the large numbers of inquiries, nor did they know enough. They decided, therefore, to address a request to the Prophet to send them someone to teach Islam. The Prophet agreed to send Muṣ'ab, one of the Muslims who had been in Abyssinia. Muṣ'ab was the first missionary of Islam to go out of Mecca. At about this time, the Prophet had a grand promise from God. He had a vision in which he saw that he was in Jerusalem and Prophets had joined behind him in congregational worship. Jerusalem only meant Medina, which was going to become the centre of the worship of the One God. Other Prophets congregating behind the Prophet of Islam meant that men following different Prophets would join Islam, and Islam would thus become a universal religion.

Conditions in Mecca had now become most critical. Persecution had assumed the worst possible form. Meccans laughed at this vision and described it as wishful thinking. They did not know that the foundations of the New Jerusalem had been laid. Nations of the East and the West were agog. They wanted to hear the Last Great Message of God. In those very days the Kaiser and the Chosroes of Iran went to war with each other. Chosroes was victorious. Syria and Palestine were overrun by Iranian armies. Jerusalem was destroyed. Egypt and Asia Minor were mastered. At the mouth of the Bosphorus, only ten miles from Constantinople, Iranian Generals were able to pitch their tents. Meccans rejoiced over Iranian victories and said the judgement of God had been delivered—the idol-worshippers of Iran had defeated a People of the Book. At that time, the Holy Prophet received the following revelation:

The Romans have been defeated in the land nearby, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious in a few years—Allah's is the command before and after that—and on that day will the believers rejoice with the help of Allah. He helps whom He pleases; and He is the Mighty, the Merciful. Allah has made this promise. Allah breaks not His promise, but most men know not (30:3-7).

The prophecy was fulfilled in a few years. The Romans defeated the Iranians and recovered the territories they had lost to them. The part of the prophecy which said, "On that day the believers shall rejoice with the help of God", was also fulfilled. Islam began to advance. The Meccans believed they had put an end to it by persuading people not to listen to Muslims but to show active hostility instead. Right at this time the Prophet received in his revelations news of victories for Muslims, and destruction for Meccans. The Prophet announced the following verses:

And they say, "Why does he not bring us a Sign from his Lord?" Has there not come to them the clear evidence in what is contained in the former books? And if We had destroyed them with a punishment before it, they would have surely said, "Our Lord, wherefore didst Thou not send to us a Messenger that we might have followed Thy commandments before we were humbled and disgraced?" Say, "Each one is waiting; wait ye, therefore, and you will know who are the people of the right path and who follow true guidance" (20:134-136).

The Meccans complained of lack of Signs. They were told that the prophecies about Islam and the Prophet recorded in earlier books should be enough. Had Meccans been destroyed before the Message of Islam could be explained to them, they would have complained of lack of chance to consider the Signs.

The Meccans must, therefore, wait.

Revelations promising victory for believers and defeat for disbelievers were being received everyday. When the Meccans looked at their own power and prosperity and at the powerlessness and poverty of Muslims, and then heard of the promises of divine help and of Muslim victories in the Prophet's daily revelations, they wondered and wondered. Were they mad or was the Prophet mad? They were hoping that persecution would compel the Muslims to give up their faith and return to the Meccans, that the Prophet himself and his closest followers would begin to have doubts about his claims. But instead of this they had to listen to confident affirmations like the following:

Nay, I swear by all that you see, and by all that you see not that it is surely the message brought by an honoured Messenger. And it is not

the word of a poet; little is it that you believe; nor is it the utterance of a soothsayer; little is it that you heed. It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. And if he had forged any sayings in Our name, We would surely have seized him by the right hand, and then surely would We have severed his life-artery, and not one of you could have held Us off from him. And surely it is an admonition for the God-fearing. And, surely, We know that some of you reject Our Signs. And, surely, it is a source of anguish for the disbelievers. And, surely, it is the true certainty. So glorify the name of thy Lord, the Great (Quran 69:39-53).

Meccans were warned that all their fond hopes would be smashed. The Prophet was neither a poet, nor a soothsayer nor a pretender. The Quran was a reading for the pious. True, it had its deniers. But it also had its secret admirers, those who were jealous of its teaching and its truths. The promises and prophecies contained in it would all be fulfilled. The Prophet was asked to ignore all opposition and go on celebrating his Mighty God.

The third *Hajj* arrived. Among the pilgrims from Medina was a large party of Muslims. Owing to Meccan opposition these Muslims from Medina wished to see the Prophet in private. The Prophet's own thoughts were turning more and more to Medina, as a likely place for migration. He mentioned this to his closest relations but they tried to dissuade him from all thoughts of this kind. They pleaded that though Mecca was full of opposition, it offered the support of several influential relations. The prospects at Medina were all uncertain and, should Medina prove as hostile as Mecca, would the Prophet's Meccan relations be able to help? The Prophet, however, was convinced that migration to Medina had been decreed. So he rejected the advice of his relations and decided to migrate to Medina.

### **First Pledge of 'Aqabah**

After midnight, the Prophet again met the Muslims from Medina in the valley of 'Aqabah. His uncle 'Abbās was with him. The Muslims from Medina numbered seventy-three, out of whom sixty-two belonged to the Khazraj tribe and eleven to the Aus. The party included two women, one being Ummi 'Ammārah, of the Banū Najjār. They had been taught Islam by Muṣ'ab, and were full of faith and determination. They all proved to be pillars of Islam. Ummi 'Ammārah is an example. She instilled in her children undying loyalty to Islam. One of her sons, Ḥabīb, was taken prisoner by Musailimah, the Pretender, in an encounter after the Prophet's death. Musailimah tried to unsettle Ḥabīb's faith. "Do you believe Muḥammad to be a Messenger of God?" he asked. "Yes," was the reply. "Do you believe me to be a Messenger of God?" asked Musailimah. "No," replied Ḥabīb. Upon this

Musailimah ordered one of his limbs to be cut off. This done, he asked Ḥabīb again, "Do you believe Muḥammad to be a Messenger of God?" "Yes," replied Ḥabīb. "Do you believe me to be a Messenger of God?" "No." Musailimah ordered another limb to be cut off Ḥabīb's body. Limb after limb was cut off in this way and Ḥabīb's body was reduced to many pieces. He died a cruel death, but left behind an unforgettable example of personal heroism and sacrifice for the sake of religious conviction (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2, p. 17).

Ummi 'Ammārah accompanied the Prophet in several wars.

This party of Medina Muslims, in short, attained to great distinction for their loyalty and faith. They came to Mecca not for wealth, but for faith; and they had it in abundance.

Moved by family ties and feeling legitimately responsible for the safety of the Prophet, 'Abbās thus addressed the party:

O Khazraj, this my relation is respected here by his people. They are not all Muslims, yet they protect him. But he has chosen now to leave us and go to you. O Khazraj, do you know what will happen? All Arabia will be against you. If you realize the risks entailed by your invitation, then take him away; if you do not, then give up your intention and let him stay here.

The leader of this party Al-Barā' replied assuredly:

We have heard you. Our resolution is firm. Our lives are at the disposal of the Prophet of God. We are decided, and only await his decision (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2, p. 18).

The Prophet gave a further exposition of Islam and its teaching. Explaining this, he told the party that he would go to Medina if they would hold Islam as dear as they held their wives and children. He had not quite finished when this party of seventy-three devotees cried, 'Yes,' 'Yes,' in one voice. In their zeal they forgot that they could be overheard. 'Abbās cautioned them to speak low. But the party was full of faith. Death now was nothing in their eyes. When 'Abbās cautioned the party, one of them said aloud, "We are not afraid, O Prophet of God. Permit us, and we can deal with the Meccans right now and avenge the wrongs they have done you." But the Prophet said he had not yet been commanded to fight.

The party then took the oath of fealty and the meeting dispersed.

The Meccans did get to know of this meeting. They went to the Medina encampment to complain against these visitors to their chiefs. 'Abdullāh bin Ubayy bin Salūl—Chief of chiefs—knew nothing of what had happened. He assured the Meccans that it must be some false rumour which they had heard. The people of Medina had accepted him as their leader and could not do

anything without his knowledge and permission. He did not know that the people of Medina had cast off the rule of Satan and accepted the rule of God instead.

### **The Hijrah**

The party returned to Medina and the Prophet and his followers started preparations for migration. Family after family began to disappear. Muslims, certain that the Kingdom of God was near, were full of courage. Sometimes a whole lane would be emptied in the course of a night. In the morning Meccans would see the doors locked and realize that the residents had migrated to Medina. The growing influence of Islam amazed them.

At last not a single Muslim remained in Mecca save a few slave converts, the Prophet himself, Abū Bakr and 'Alī. The Meccans realized that their prey was about to escape. The chiefs assembled again and decided they should now kill the Prophet. By a special divine design, it seems, the date they appointed for killing the Prophet was appointed for his escape. When the Meccan party was collecting in front of the Prophet's house with intent to kill, the Prophet was moving out in the secrecy of the night. The Meccans must have feared anticipation of their foul design by the Prophet. They proceeded cautiously and when the Prophet himself passed by, they took him for someone else, and withdrew to avoid being noticed. The Prophet's closest friend Abū Bakr had been informed of the Prophet's plan the day before. He duly joined and then both left Mecca, and took shelter in a cave called Thaur, about three or four miles from Mecca over a hill. When the Meccans learnt of the Prophet's escape, they collected and sent a force in pursuit. Led by a tracker, they reached Thaur. Standing at the mouth of the cave in which the Prophet and Abū Bakr sat hiding, the tracker said that Muḥammad was either in the cave or had ascended to heaven. Abū Bakr heard this and his heart sank. "The enemy has nearly got us," he whispered. "Fear not, God is with us," replied the Prophet. "I fear not for myself," went on Abū Bakr, "but for you. For, if I die, I am but an ordinary mortal; but if you die, it will mean death to faith and spirit" (*Zurqānī*). "Even so, fear not," assured the Prophet, "We are not two in this cave. There is a third—God" (*Bukhārī*).

Meccan tyranny was destined to end. Islam was to have the chance to grow. The pursuers were deceived. They ridiculed the tracker's judgement. It was too open a cave, they said, for anybody to take shelter in, for with snakes and vipers it was none too safe. If they had but bent a little, they could have sighted the two. But they did not, and dismissing the tracker, they returned to Mecca.

For two days the Prophet and Abū Bakr waited in the cave. On the third night, according to the plan, two fleet camels were brought to the cave, one for the Prophet and the guide; the other for Abū Bakr and his servant, ‘Āmir bin Fuhairah.

### **Surāqah Pursues The Prophet**

Before setting out, the Prophet looked back at Mecca. Emotions welled up in his heart. Mecca was his birthplace. He had lived there as child and man and had received there the divine call. It was the place where his forefathers had lived and flourished since the time of Ishmael. With these thoughts, he had a last long look at it and then said, "Mecca, thou art dearer to me than any other place in the world, but thy people would not let me live here." Upon this Abū Bakr said, "The place hath turned out its Prophet. It only awaiteth its destruction." The Meccans, after the failure of their pursuit, put a prize on the heads of the two fugitives. Whoever captured and restored to the Meccans the Prophet or Abū Bakr dead or alive was to have a reward of a hundred camels. The announcement was made among the tribes around Mecca. Tempted by the reward, Surāqah bin Mālik, a Bedouin chief, started in pursuit of the party and ultimately sighted them on the road to Medina. He saw two mounted camels and, feeling sure they were bearing the Prophet and Abū Bakr, spurred on his horse. The horse reared and fell before it had gone very far and Surāqah fell with it. Surāqah's own account of what happened is interesting. He says:

After I fell from the horse, I consulted my luck in the superstitious fashion common with Arabs by a throw of the arrows. The arrows boded ill-luck. But the temptation of the reward was great. I mounted again and resumed my pursuit and nearly overtook the party. The Prophet rode with dignity, and did not look back. Abū Bakr, however, looked back again and again (evidently, out of fear for the safety of the Prophet). As I neared them, my horse reared again, and I fell off. I consulted the arrows again; and again they boded ill-luck. My horse's hoofs sank deep into the sand. Mounting again and resuming the pursuit seemed difficult. I then understood that the party was under divine protection. I called out to them and entreated them to stop. When near enough I told them of my evil intention and of my change of heart. I told them I was giving up the pursuit and returning. The Prophet let me go, but made me promise not to reveal their whereabouts to anybody. I became convinced that the Prophet was a true one, destined to succeed. I requested the Prophet to write me a guarantee of peace to serve me when he became supreme. The Prophet

asked ‘Āmir bin Fuhairah to write me a guarantee, and he did. As I got ready to return with it, the Prophet received a revelation about the future and said, "Surāqah, how wilt thou feel with the gold bangles of the Chosroes on thy wrists?" Amazed at the prophecy I asked, "Which Chosroes? Chosroes bin Hormizd, the Emperor of Iran?" The Prophet said, "Yes" (*Usdul-Ghābbah*).

Sixteen or seventeen years later the prophecy was literally fulfilled. Surāqah accepted Islam and went to Medina. The Prophet died, and after him, first Abū Bakr, and then ‘Umar became the *Khalīfah* of Islam. The growing influence of Islam made the Iranians jealous and led them to attack the Muslims but, instead of subjugating the Muslims, they were themselves subjugated by them. The capital of Iran fell to the Muslims who captured its treasures, including the gold bangles which the Chosroes wore at state functions. After his conversion, Surāqah used to describe his pursuit of the Prophet and his party and to tell of what passed between him and the Prophet. When the spoils of the war with Iran were placed before ‘Umar, he saw the gold bangles and remembered what the Prophet had told Surāqah. It was a grand prophecy made at a time of utter helplessness. ‘Umar decided to stage a visible fulfilment of the prophecy. He, therefore, sent for Surāqah and ordered him to put on the gold bangles. Surāqah protested that the wearing of gold by men had been forbidden by Islam. ‘Umar said that this was true, but that the occasion was an exception. The Prophet had foreseen Chosroes’ gold bangles on his wrists; therefore he had to wear them now, even on pain of punishment. Surāqah was objecting out of deference to the Prophet’s teaching; otherwise he was as eager as anyone else to provide visible proof of the fulfilment of the great prophecy. He put on the bangles and Muslims saw the prophecy fulfilled (*Usdul-Ghābbah*). The fugitive Prophet had become a king. He himself was no longer in this world. But those who succeeded him could witness the fulfilment of his words and visions.

### **The Prophet Arrives at Medina**

To return to our narrative of the Hījah. After the Prophet had dismissed Surāqah he continued his journey to Medina unmolested. When he reached Medina, the Prophet found the people waiting impatiently. A more auspicious day could not have dawned for them. For, the sun which had risen for Mecca had come instead to shine on Medina.

News that the Prophet had left Mecca had reached them, so they were expecting his arrival. Parties of them went miles out of Medina to look for him. They went in the morning and returned disappointed in the evening.



When at last the Prophet did reach Medina, he decided to stop for a while in Qubā, a nearby village. A Jew had seen the two camels and had decided that they were carrying the Prophet and his Companions. He climbed an eminence and shouted, "Sons of Qaila, he for whom you waited has come." Everyone in Medina who heard this cry rushed to Qubā, while the people of Qubā, overjoyed at the arrival of the Prophet in their midst sang songs in his honour.

The utter simplicity of the Prophet is illustrated by an incident which took place at this time at Qubā. Most people in Medina had not seen the Prophet before. When they saw his party sitting under a tree, many of them took Abū Bakr for the Prophet. Abū Bakr, though younger, had a greyer beard and was better dressed than the Prophet. So they turned to him and sat in front of him, after showing him the obeisance due to the Prophet. When Abū Bakr saw that he was being mistaken for the Prophet, he rose, took his mantle and hung it against the sun and said, "Prophet of God, you are in the sun. I make this shade for you" (*Bukhārī*). With tact and courtesy he made plain to visitors from Medina their error. The Prophet stopped at Qubā for ten days, after which the people of Medina took him to their city. When he entered the town, he found that all the people, men, women and children, had turned out to receive him. Among the songs they sang was:

Moon of the fourteenth night has risen on us from behind al-Widā'. So long as we have in our midst one who calls us to God, it is incumbent upon us to tender our thanks to God. To you who have been sent to us by God we present our perfect obedience (*Ḥalbiyyah*).

The Prophet did not enter Medina from the eastern side. When the people of Medina described him as a "moon of the fourteenth night", they meant that they were living in the dark before the Prophet came to shed his light upon them. It was a Monday when the Prophet entered Medina. It was a Monday when he left the cave Thaur and, strange as it may seem, it was a Monday on which he took Mecca about ten years later.

### **Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī as Prophet's host**

While the Prophet was in Medina, everybody longed to have the honour of being his host. As his camel passed through a lane, families would line up to receive him. With one voice they would say, "Here we are with our homes, our property and our lives to receive you and to offer our protection to you. Come and live with us." Many would show greater zeal, go forward and hold the reins of the camel and insist on the Prophet's dismounting in front of their doors and entering their houses. Politely the Prophet would refuse saying, "Leave my camel alone. She is under the command of God; she will stop

where God wants her to stop." Ultimately it stopped on a site which belonged to orphans of the Banū Najjār tribe. The Prophet dismounted and said, "It seems that this is where God wants us to stop." He made enquiries. A trustee of the orphans came forward and offered the site for the use of the Prophet. The Prophet replied that he would not accept the offer unless he were allowed to pay. A price was settled and the Prophet decided to build a mosque and some houses on it. This settled, the Prophet asked who lived nearest to the site. Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī came forward and said that his house was the nearest and that his services were at the Prophet's disposal. The Prophet asked him to prepare a room in his house for him. Abū Ayyūb's house was double-storeyed. He offered to let the Prophet have the upper storey. But the Prophet preferred to have the lower storey for the convenience of his visitors.

The devotion which the people of Medina had for the Prophet showed itself again. Abū Ayyūb agreed to let the Prophet have the lower storey, but refused to go to sleep on a floor under which lived the Prophet. He and his wife thought it discourteous to do so. A pitcher of water was accidentally broken and water flowed on the floor. Abū Ayyūb, fearing lest some water should drip through to the room occupied by the Prophet, took his quilt and with it dried up the water before any could drip through. In the morning he called on the Prophet and narrated the events of the night before, upon hearing which the Prophet agreed to occupy the upper storey. Abū Ayyūb prepared meals and sent them up. The Prophet ate whatever he wanted and Abū Ayyūb whatever remained. After a few days, others demanded a share in entertaining the Prophet. Until the Prophet settled in his own house and made his own arrangements he was entertained by the people of Medina in turn. A widow had an only son named Anas, aged about eight or nine. She brought the boy to the Prophet and offered him for the Prophet's personal service. This Anas became immortalized in the annals of Islam. He became a very learned man, and also rich. He attained to over one hundred years of age and in the days of the *Khalīfahs* was held in great esteem by everybody. Anas is reported to have said that although he went into the service of the Prophet as a boy and remained with him until the Prophet died, never did the Prophet speak unkindly to him, nor did he ever admonish him, nor did he ever set him a duty harder than he could perform. During his stay in Medina, the Prophet had only Anas with him. The testimony of Anas, therefore, reveals the Prophet's character as it developed in the days of his growing power and prosperity at Medina.

Later, the Prophet sent his freedman Zaid to Mecca to fetch his family and relations. The Meccans had been stupefied by the sudden and well-planned departure of the Prophet and his followers. For sometime, therefore,

they did nothing to vex him. When the Prophet's family and the family of Abū Bakr left Mecca they raised no difficulty. The two families reached Medina unmolested. In the meantime the Prophet laid the foundations of a mosque on the site he had bought for the purpose. After this, he built houses for himself and for his Companions. About seven months were spent on their completion.

### **Life Unsafe at Medina**

Within a few days of the Prophet's arrival in Medina, the pagan tribes there became interested in Islam and a majority of them joined. Many, not persuaded at heart, also joined. In this way a party joined the fold of Islam who were not Muslims at heart. Its members played a very sinister part in subsequent history. Some of them became sincere Muslims. Others remained insincere and kept intriguing against Islam and Muslims. Some refused to join at all. But they could not stand the growing influence of the new faith, so they migrated from Medina to Mecca. Medina became a Muslim town. In it was established the worship of the One God. There was not a second town in the world then which could make this claim. It was no small joy to the Prophet and his friends that within a few days of their migration a whole town had agreed to give up the worship of idols and to establish instead the worship of the One Invisible God. But there was no peace yet for Muslims. In Medina itself a party of Arabs had only outwardly joined Islam. Inwardly, they were the sworn enemies of the Prophet. Then there were the Jews, who continuously intrigued against him. The Prophet was aware of these dangers. He remained alert and urged his friends and followers to be on their guard. He often remained awake the whole night (*Bārī*, Vol. 6, p. 60). Tired by night-long vigilance he once expressed a desire for help. Soon he heard the sound of armour. "What is this?" he asked. "It is Sa'd bin Waqqāṣ, O Prophet, who has come to do sentinel duty for you" (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim*). The people of Medina were alive to their great responsibility. They had invited the Prophet to come and live in their midst and it was now their duty to protect him. The tribes took counsel and decided to guard the Prophet's house in turn.

In the unsafety of his person and in the absence of peace for his followers, there was no difference between the Prophet's life at Mecca and his life at Medina. The only difference was that at Medina Muslims were able to worship in public in the mosque which they had built in the name of God. They were able to assemble for this purpose five times in the day without let or hindrance.

Two or three months passed. The people of Mecca recovered from their bewilderment and started making plans for the vexation of Muslims. They soon found that it did not fulfil their purpose merely to trouble Muslims in and around Mecca. It was necessary to attack the Prophet and his followers at

Medina and turn them out of their new refuge. Accordingly they addressed a letter to ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl, a leader of Medina, who, before the Prophet’s arrival, had been accepted as king of Medina by all parties. They said in this letter that they had been shocked at the Prophet’s arrival at Medina and that it was wrong on the part of the people of Medina to afford refuge to him. In the end they said:

Now that you have admitted our enemy in your home, we swear by God and declare that we, the people of Mecca, will join in an attack on Medina unless you, the people of Medina, agree to turn him out of Medina or give him a joint fight. When we attack Medina, we will put to the sword all able-bodied men and enslave all women (Abū Dāwūd, Kitābul-Kharāj).

‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl thought this letter a Godsend. He consulted other hypocrites in Medina and persuaded them that if they allowed the Prophet to live in peace among them, they would invite the hostility of Mecca. It behoved them, therefore, to make war upon the Prophet, if only in order to appease the Meccans. The Prophet got to know of this. He went to ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl and tried to convince him that such a step would prove suicidal. Many people in Medina had become Muslims and were prepared to lay down their lives for Islam. If ‘Abdullāh declared war upon Muslims, the majority of the people of Medina would fight on the side of Muslims. Such a war would, therefore, cost him dear and spell his own destruction. ‘Abdullāh, impressed by this advice, was dissuaded from his plans.

At this time, the Prophet took another important step. He collected the Muslims and suggested that every two Muslims should become linked together as two brothers. The idea was well received. Medinite took Meccan as his brother. Under this new brotherhood, the Muslims of Medina offered to share their property and their belongings with the Muslims of Mecca. One Medinite Muslim offered to divorce one of his two wives and to have her married to his Meccan brother. The Meccan Muslims declined to accept the offers of the Muslims of Medina out of regard for the needs of the latter. But the Muslims of Medina remained insistent, and the point had to be referred to the Prophet. The Muslims of Medina urged that the Meccan Muslims were their brothers; so, they had to share their property with them. The Meccan Muslims did not know how to manage land. But they could share the produce of the land if not the land itself. The Meccan Muslims declined with thanks this incredibly generous offer, and preferred to stick to their own vocation of trade. Many Meccan Muslims became rich again. But Muslims of Medina always remembered their offer to share their property with Meccan Muslims.

Many a time when a Medinite Muslim died, his sons divided the inheritance with their Meccan brothers. For many years, the practice continued, until the Quran abolished it by its teaching about the division of inheritance (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim*).

### **Pact Between Various Tribes of Medina**

Besides uniting Meccan and Medinite Muslims in a brotherhood, the Holy Prophet instituted a covenant between all the inhabitants of Medina. By this covenant, Arabs and the Jews were united into a common citizenship with Muslims. The Prophet explained to both Arabs and Jews that before the Muslims emerged as a group in Medina, there were only two groups in their town, but with Muslims now, there were three groups. It was but proper that they should enter into an agreement which should be binding upon them all, and which should assure to all of them a measure of peace. Eventually an agreement was arrived at. The agreement said:

Between the Prophet of God and the faithful on the one hand, and all those on the other, who voluntarily agree to enter. If any of the Meccan Muslims is killed, the Meccan Muslims will themselves be responsible. The responsibility for securing the release of their prisoners will also be theirs. The Muslim tribes of Medina similarly will be responsible for their own lives and their prisoners. Whoever rebels or promotes enmity and disorder will be considered a common enemy. It will be the duty of all the others to fight against him, even though he happens to be a son or a close relation. If a disbeliever is killed in battle by a believer, his Muslim relations will seek no revenge. Nor will they assist disbelievers against believers. The Jews who join this covenant will be helped by Muslims. The Jews will not be put to any hardship. Their enemies will not be helped against them. No disbeliever will give quarter to anybody from Mecca. He will not act as a trustee for any Meccan property. In a war between Muslims and disbelievers he will take no part. If a believer is maltreated without cause, Muslims will have the right to fight against those who maltreat. If a common enemy attack Medina, the Jews will side with the Muslims and share the expenses of the battle. The Jewish tribes in covenant with the other tribes of Medina will have rights similar to those of Muslims. The Jews will keep to their own faith, and Muslims to their own. The rights enjoyed by the Jews will also be enjoyed by their followers. The citizens of Medina will not have the right to declare war without the sanction of the Prophet. But this will not prejudice the right of any individual to avenge an individual wrong. The Jews will bear the expenses of their

own organization, and Muslims their own. But in case of war, they will act with unity. The city of Medina will be regarded as sacred and inviolate by those who sign the covenant. Strangers who come under the protection of its citizens will be treated as citizens. But the people of Medina will not be allowed to admit a woman to its citizenship without the permission of her relations. All disputes will be referred for decision to God and the Prophet. Parties to this covenant will not have the right to enter into any agreement with the Meccans or their allies. This, because parties to this covenant agree in resisting their common enemies. The parties will remain united in peace as in war. No party will enter into a separate peace. But no party will be obliged to take part in war. A party, however, which commits any excess will be liable to a penalty. Certainly God is the Protector of the righteous and the faithful, and Muḥammad is His Prophet (*Hishām*).

This is the covenant in brief. It has been prepared from scraps to be found in historical records. It emphasizes beyond any doubt that in settling disputes and disagreements between the parties at Medina, the guiding principles were to be honesty, truth and justice. Those committing excesses were to be held responsible for those excesses. The covenant makes it clear that the Prophet of Islam was determined to treat with civility and kindness the other citizens of Medina, and to regard them and deal with them as brethren. If disputes and conflicts arose later, the responsibility rested with the Jews.

As we have already said, two or three months passed away before Meccans could renew their planned hostility against Islam. An occasion was provided by Sa'd bin Mu'ādh, Chief of the Aus tribe of Medina, who arrived at Mecca for the circuit of the Ka'bah. Abū Jahl saw him do this and said, "After giving protection to this apostate Muḥammad, do you expect you can come to Mecca and circuit the Ka'bah in peace? Do you think you can protect and save him? I swear by God, that had it not been for Abū Sufyān, you could not have returned safe to your family."

Sa'd bin Mu'ādh replied, "Take it from me, if you Meccans stop us from visiting and circuiting the Ka'bah, you will have no peace on your road to Syria." At about that time Walīd bin Mughīrah, a Meccan chief, became seriously ill. He apprehended that his end had come. The other chiefs of Mecca were sitting around. Walīd could not control himself and began to cry. The Meccan chiefs wondered at this and asked him why he was crying. "Do you think I am afraid of death? No, it is not death I fear. What I fear is lest the Faith of Muḥammad should spread and even Mecca go under him." Abū Sufyān assured Walīd that as long as they lived they would resist with their lives the spread of this Faith (*Khamīs*, Vol. I).

### **Meccans Preparing to Attack Medina**

From this narration of events it is quite clear that the lull in Meccan hostility was only temporary. The leaders of Mecca were preparing for a renewed attack on Islam. Dying chiefs bound their survivors to oaths of hostility against the Prophet, and roused them to war against him and his followers. The people of Medina were invited to take up arms against the Muslims and were warned that, if they refused to do so, the Meccans and their allied tribes would attack Medina, kill their men and enslave their women. If the Prophet had stood aside and done nothing for the defence of Medina, he would have incurred a terrible responsibility. The Prophet, therefore, instituted a system of reconnaissance. He sent parties of men to places round about Mecca to report on signs of preparations for war. Now and then, there were incidents—scuffles and fights—between these parties and Meccans. European writers say these incidents were initiated by the Prophet and that, therefore, in the wars which ensued, he was the aggressor. But we have before us the thirteen years of Meccan tyranny, their intrigues for antagonizing the people of Medina against the Muslims, and the threatened attack upon Medina itself. Nobody who remembers all this can charge the Prophet with the responsibility for initiating these incidents. If he sent out parties of Muslims for purpose of reconnaissance, it was in self-defence. Thirteen years of tyranny were justification enough for the preparations of Muslims for self-defence. If wars ensued between them and their Meccan enemy, the responsibility did not lie with Muslims. The slender grounds on which Christian nations today declare war against one another are well known. If half of what the Meccans did to Muslims is done today to a European people, they would feel justified in going to war. When the people of one country organize on a large scale the killing of another, when one people compels another to leave their homes, does it not give the victims the right to make war? After Muslims had migrated to Medina, no further ground was needed for them to declare war on the Meccans. But the Prophet declared no war. He showed tolerance and confined his defensive activities to reconnaissance. The Meccans, however, continued to irritate and harass the Muslims. They excited the people of Medina against them and interfered with their right of pilgrimage. They changed their normal caravan routes and started going through tribal areas around Medina, to rouse the tribes against the Muslims. The peace of Medina was threatened; so it was the obvious duty of Muslims to accept the challenge of war which the Meccans had been throwing down for fourteen years. Nobody under the circumstances could question the right of Muslims to accept this challenge.

While the Prophet was busy reconnoitring, he was not neglecting the normal and spiritual needs of his following in Medina. A great majority of the people of Medina had become Muslims, by outward profession as well as by inward faith. Some had joined by outward profession only. The Prophet, therefore, started instituting the Islamic form of government in his small following. In earlier days, Arabs had settled their disputes by the sword and by individual violence. The Prophet introduced juridical procedures. Judges were appointed to settle claims which individuals or parties brought against one another. Unless a judge declared a claim to be just and true, it was not admitted. In the old days intellectual pursuits had been looked upon with contempt. The Prophet took steps to promote literacy and love of learning. Those who could read and write were asked to teach others the same arts. Injustice and cruelty were ended. The rights of women were established. The rich were to pay for the needs of the poor and for improving the social amenities of Medina. Labourers were protected from exploitation. For weak and incompetent heirs, arrangements were made for the appointment of trustees. Loan transactions began to be committed to writing. The importance of fulfilling all undertakings began to be impressed. The excesses committed against slaves were abolished. Hygiene and public sanitation began to receive attention. A census of the population was undertaken. Lanes and highways were ordered to be widened, and steps were taken to keep them clean. In short, laws were instituted for the promotion of an ideal family and social life. The savage Arabs for the first time in their history were introduced to the rules of politeness and civilized existence.

### **Battle of Badr**

While the Prophet planned for the practical institution of laws which were to serve not only his own generation of Arabs but all mankind for all time to come, the people of Mecca made their plans for war. The Prophet planned for a law which was to bring to his own people and all the others peace, honour and progress; his Meccan enemy planned for the destruction of that law. The Meccan plans eventually resulted in the Battle of Badr. It was the eighteenth month after the Hijrah. A commercial caravan led by Abū Sufyān was returning from Syria. Under pretence of protecting this caravan, the Meccans raised a large army and decided to take it to Medina. The Holy Prophet came to know of these preparations. He also had revelations from God which said that the time to pay back the enemy in his own coin had come. He went out of Medina with a number of followers. Nobody at the time knew whether this party of Muslims would have to confront the caravan which was coming from Syria or the army which was coming from Mecca. The party numbered about three hundred. A commercial caravan in those days did not consist only of



camels loaded with merchandise. It also included armed men who guarded the caravan and escorted it through its journey. Since tension had arisen between Meccans and the Muslims of Medina, the Meccan chiefs had begun to take special care about arming the escort. History records the fact of two other caravans which passed by this route a short while before. In one of these, two hundred armed men were provided as guard and escort, and in the other three hundred. It is wrong to suggest, as Christian writers do, that the Prophet took three hundred followers and set out to attack an undefended commercial caravan. The suggestion is mischievous and unfounded. The caravan which was now coming from Syria was a large one and, considering its size and the armed escort provided for other caravans, it seems reasonable to think that about four to five hundred armed guards must have been provided to serve as its escort. To say that the Muslim party of three hundred poorly-armed men were led by the Prophet to attack such a well-armed caravan in the hope of looting it is unjust in the extreme. Only rank prejudice and determined ill-will against Islam can prompt such a thought. If the Muslim party was out to confront only this caravan, their adventure could have been described as an adventure of war—albeit a war in self-defence—for the Muslim party from Medina was small and ill-armed and the Meccan caravan was large and well-armed, and for a long time they had been carrying on a campaign of hostility against the Muslims of Medina.

In point of fact the conditions under which this small party of Muslims set out of Medina were far more grave. As we have said, they did not know whether it was the caravan from Syria or the army from Mecca which they would have to confront. The uncertainty under which the Muslims laboured is hinted at in the Quran. But the Muslims were prepared for both. The uncertainty under which the Muslims left Medina redounds to the credit of their faith and their tremendous sincerity. It was after they had gone some distance from Medina that the Prophet made it known to them that they would have to confront the large Meccan army rather than the small Syrian caravan.

Speculations had reached Muslims about the size of the Meccan army. The most moderate of these speculations placed the number at one thousand, all of them seasoned soldiers skilled in the art of war. The number accompanying the Prophet was only three hundred and thirteen, and of these many were unskilled and inexperienced, and most were ill-armed. A great majority of them went on foot, or mounted on camels. There were only two horses in the whole party. This party, which was as poorly equipped with the weapons of war as it was raw in experience, had to confront a force three times its number, consisting mostly of experienced fighters. It was quite obviously the most dangerous thing ever undertaken in history. The Holy Prophet was wise enough to ensure that nobody took part in it without due

knowledge and without his will and heart in it. He told his party clearly that it was no longer the caravan they had to confront but the army from Mecca. He asked the party for their counsel. One after another, his Meccan followers stood up and assured the Prophet of their loyalty and zeal, and of their determination to fight the Meccan enemy who had come to attack the Muslims of Medina in their homes. Every time the Prophet heard a Meccan Muslim, he asked for more counsel and more advice. The Muslims of Medina had been silent. The aggressors were from Mecca, with blood relations to many of those Muslims who had migrated with the Prophet to Medina and who were now in this small party. The Muslims of Medina were afraid lest their zeal to fight the Meccan enemy should injure the feelings of their Meccan brethren. But when the Prophet insisted on more and more counsel, one of the Medinite Muslims stood up and said, "Prophet of God, you are having all the counsel you want, but you continue to ask for more. Perhaps you refer to us, the Muslims of Medina. Is that true?"

"Yes," said the Prophet.

"You ask for our counsel," he said, "because you think that when you came to us, we agreed to fight on your side only in case you and your fellow emigrants from Mecca were attacked in Medina. But now we seem to have come out of Medina, and you feel that our agreement does not cover the conditions under which we find ourselves today. But O Prophet of God, when we entered into that agreement we did not know you as well as we do now. We know now what high spiritual station you hold. We care not for what we agreed to. We now stand by you, whatever you ask us to do. We will not behave like the followers of Moses who said, 'Go you and your God and fight the enemy, we remain here behind.' If we must fight, we will and we will fight to the right of you, to the left of you, in front of you and behind you. True, the enemy wants to get at you. But we assure you that he will not do so without stepping over our dead bodies. Prophet of God, you invite us to fight. We are prepared to do more. Not far from here is the sea. If you command us to jump into it, we will hesitate not" (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Maghāzī, and Hishām*).

This was the spirit of devotion and sacrifice which early Muslims displayed, and the like of which is not to be found in the history of the world. The example of the followers of Moses has been cited above. As for the disciples of Jesus, we know they abandoned Jesus at a critical time. One of them gave him away for a paltry sum. Another cursed him, and the remaining ten ran away. The Muslims who joined the Prophet from Medina had been in his companionship only for a year and a half. But they had attained to such strength of faith that, had the Prophet but ordered, they would have plunged themselves heedlessly into the sea. The Prophet took counsel. But he had no

doubt at all as to the devotion of his following. He took counsel in order to sift the weaklings and send them away. But he found that the Meccan and the Medinite Muslims vied with one another in the expression of their devotion. Both were determined that they would not turn their backs to the enemy, even though the enemy was three times their number and far better equipped, armed and experienced. They would rather put their faith in the promises of God, show their regard for Islam, and lay down their lives in its defence.

Assured of this devotion by both Meccan and Medinite Muslims, the Prophet advanced. When he reached a place called Badr, he accepted the suggestion of one of his followers and ordered his men to settle near the brook of Badr. The Muslims took possession of this source of water, but the land on which they took up their positions was all sand, and therefore unsuitable for the manoeuvres of fighting men. The followers of the Prophet showed natural anxiety over this disadvantage. The Prophet himself shared the anxiety of his followers and spent the whole night praying. Again and again he said:

My God, over the entire face of the earth just now, there are only these three hundred men who are devoted to Thee and determined to establish Thy worship. My God, if these three hundred men die today at the hands of their enemy in this battle, who will be left behind to glorify Thy name? (*Ṭabarī*)

God heard the supplication of His Prophet. Rain came overnight. The soft sandy part of the field which the Muslims occupied became wet and solid. The hard part of the field occupied by the enemy became muddy and slippery. Maybe the Meccan enemy chose this part of the field and left the other for the Muslims because their experienced eye preferred firm ground to facilitate the movements of their soldiers and cavalry. But the tables were turned upon them by a timely act of God. The rain which came overnight made the sandy part of the field which was in the possession of the Muslims hard and the hard field where the Meccans had encamped slippery. During the night the Prophet had a clear intimation from God that important members of the enemy would meet with their death. He even had individual names revealed to him. The spots at which they were to drop dead were also revealed. They died as they were named and dropped where it had been foretold.

In the battle itself this little party of Muslims displayed wonderful daring and devotion. One incident proves this. One of the few generals which the Muslim force included was ‘Abdur-Raḥmān bin ‘Auf, one of the chiefs of Mecca and an experienced soldier in his own right. When the battle began, he looked to his right and to his left to see what kind of support he had. He found

to his amazement, that he had only two lads from Medina on his flanks. His heart sank and he said to himself, "Every General needs support on his sides. More so I on this day. But I only have two raw boys. What can I do with them?" 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin 'Auf says he had hardly finished saying this to himself when one of the boys touched his side with his elbow. As he bent over to hear the boy, the latter said, "Uncle, we have heard of one Abū Jahl, who used to harass and torment the Prophet. Uncle, I want to fight him; tell me where he is." 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin 'Auf had not yet replied to this youthful inquiry, when his attention was similarly drawn by the boy on the other side, who asked him the same question. 'Abdur-Raḥmān was not a little amazed at the courage and determination of these two boys. A seasoned soldier, he did not think that even he would select the commander of the enemy for an individual encounter. 'Abdur-Raḥmān raised his finger to point at Abū Jahl—armed to the teeth and standing behind the lines protected by two senior Generals, with drawn swords. 'Abdur-Raḥmān had not dropped his finger, when the two boys dashed into the enemy ranks with the speed of an eagle, making straight for their chosen target. The attack was sudden. The soldiers and guards were stupefied. They attacked the boys. One of the boys lost an arm. But they remained unnerved and unbeaten. They attacked Abū Jahl, with such violence that the great commander fell to the ground, mortally wounded. From the spirited determination of these two boys, one can judge how deeply the followers of the Prophet, both old and young, had been stirred by the cruel persecution to which they and the Prophet had been subjected. We only read about them in history, but yet are deeply stirred. The people of Medina heard of these cruelties from eyewitnesses. The feelings they must have had, can well be imagined. They heard of Meccan cruelties on the one hand and of the forbearance of the Prophet on the other. No wonder their determination mounted high to avenge the wrongs done to the Prophet and to the Muslims of Mecca. They looked only for an opportunity to tell the Meccan tormentors that if the Muslims did not retaliate, it was not because they were powerless; it was because they had not been permitted by God to do so. How determined this small Muslim force was to die fighting can be gauged from another incident. Battle had not yet been joined when Abū Jahl sent a Bedouin chief to the Muslim side to report on their numbers. This chief returned and reported that the Muslims were three hundred or more. Abū Jahl and his followers were glad. They thought the Muslims easy prey. "But," said the Bedouin chief, "my advice to you is—Don't fight these men, because every one of them seems determined to die! I have seen not men but death mounted on camels" (*Ṭabarī* and *Hishām*). The Bedouin chief was right—those who are prepared to die do not die easily.

## **A Great Prophecy Fulfilled**

The time of the battle drew near. The Prophet came out of the little hut in which he had been praying, and announced:

"The hosts will certainly be routed and will show their backs."

These were the words revealed to the Prophet sometime before in Mecca. Evidently they related to this battle. When Meccan cruelty had reached its extreme limit, and Muslims were migrating to places where they could have peace, the Prophet had the following verses revealed to him by God:

And surely to the people of Pharaoh also came Warners. They rejected all Our Signs. So We seized them as the seizing of One Who is Mighty and Omnipotent. Are your disbelievers better than those? Or have you an exemption in the Scriptures? The hosts will certainly be routed and will show their backs. Nay, the Hour is their appointed time; and the Hour will be most calamitous and most bitter. Surely the offenders will be in bewilderment and flaming fire. On the day when they will be dragged into the Fire on their faces and it will be said to them, "Taste ye the touch of burning" (54:42-49).

These verses are part of Sūrah Al-Qamar and this Sūrah, according to all reports, was revealed in Mecca. Muslim authorities place the date of its revelation somewhere between the fifth and tenth year of the Prophet's Call, that is, at least three years before the Hijrah (i.e. the year of the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina). More likely, it was revealed eight years before. European authorities have the same view. According to Nöldeke, the whole of this chapter was revealed after the fifth year of the Prophet's Call. Wherry thinks this date a little too early. According to him, the chapter belongs to the sixth or seventh year before the Hijrah, or after the Prophet's Call. In short, both Muslim and non-Muslim authorities agree that this chapter was revealed years before the Prophet and his followers migrated from Mecca to Medina. The prophetic value of the Meccan verses is beyond dispute. There is in these verses a clear hint of what was in store for the Meccans in the battlefield of Badr. The fate they were going to meet is clearly foretold. When the Prophet came out of his hut, he reiterated the prophetic description contained in the Meccan chapter. He must have been put in mind of the Meccan verses, during his prayers in the hut. By reciting one of the verses he reminded his followers that the Hour promised in the Meccan revelation had come.

And the Hour had really come. The Prophet Isaiah (21:13-17) had foretold this very hour. The battle began, even though Muslims were not ready for it and non-Muslims had been advised against taking part in it. Three hundred and thirteen Muslims, most of them inexperienced and unused to

warfare, and nearly all of them unequipped, stood before a number three times as large, and all of them seasoned soldiers. In a few hours, many noted chiefs of Mecca met their end. Just as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold, the glory of Kedar faded away. The Meccan army fled in miserable haste, leaving behind their dead as well as some prisoners. Among the prisoners was the Prophet's uncle, 'Abbās, who generally stood by the Prophet during the days at Mecca. 'Abbās had been compelled to join the Meccans and to fight the Prophet. Another prisoner was Abul-'Āṣ, a son-in-law of the Prophet. Among the dead was Abū Jahl, Commander-in-Chief of the Meccan army and, according to all accounts, arch-enemy of Islam.

Victory came, but it brought mixed feelings to the Prophet. He rejoiced over the fulfilment of divine promises, repeated during the fourteen years which had gone by, promises which had also been recorded in some of the earliest religious writings. But at the same time he grieved over the plight of the Meccans. What a pitiable end had they met! If this victory had come to another in his place, he would have jumped with joy. But the sight of the prisoners before him, bound and handcuffed, brought tears to the eyes of the Prophet and his faithful friend Abū Bakr. 'Umar, who succeeded Abū Bakr as the Second Khalīfah of Islam, saw this but could not understand. Why should the Prophet and Abū Bakr weep over a victory? 'Umar was bewildered. So he made bold to ask the Prophet, "Prophet of God, tell me why you weep when God has given you such a grand victory. If we must weep, I will weep with you, or put on a weeping face at least." The Prophet pointed to the miserable plight of the Meccan prisoners. This was what disobedience of God led to.

The Prophet Isaiah spoke again and again of the justice of this Prophet, who had emerged victorious from a deadly battle. Of this there was a grand demonstration on this occasion. Returning to Medina the Prophet rested for the night on the way. The devoted followers who watched him could see that he turned from side to side and could not sleep. They soon guessed that it was because he heard the groans of his uncle, 'Abbās, who lay nearby, bound tight as a prisoner of war. They loosened the cord on 'Abbās. 'Abbās stopped groaning. The Prophet, no longer disturbed by his groans, went to sleep. A little later he woke up and wondered why he no longer heard 'Abbās groan. He half thought 'Abbās had gone into a swoon. But the Companions guarding 'Abbās told him they had loosened the cord on 'Abbās to let him (the Prophet) sleep undisturbed. "No, no," said the Prophet, "there must be no injustice. If 'Abbās is related to me, other prisoners are related to others. Loosen the cords on all of them or tie the cord tight on 'Abbās also." The Companions heard this admonition and decided to loosen the cords on all the prisoners, and themselves bear the responsibility for their safe custody. Of the prisoners,

those who were literate were promised freedom if they each undertook to make ten Meccan boys literate—this being their ransom for liberty. Those who had nobody to pay ransom for them, obtained their liberty for the asking. Those who could afford to pay ransom, were set free after they had paid it. By setting the prisoners free in this way, the Prophet put an end to the cruel practice of converting prisoners of war into slaves.

### **Battle of Uḥud**

When the Meccan army fled from Badr they announced that they would attack Medina again and avenge upon the Muslims for what the Meccans had suffered in the battle; and only a year later they did attack Medina again in full force. They felt so humiliated and disgraced at their defeat that the Meccan chiefs forbade surviving relations to weep over those who had died in the battle. They also laid down that profits from commercial caravans would be constituted into a war fund. With full preparations, therefore, an army of three thousand under the command of Abū Sufyān attacked Medina. The Prophet held a council and asked his followers whether they would meet the enemy in Medina or outside. He himself favoured the former alternative. He preferred to let the Muslims stay in Medina and let the enemy come and attack them in their homes. This, he thought, would place the responsibility for aggression and attack on the enemy. But at the council were many Muslims who had not had the chance to take part in the Battle of Badr, and who now longed to fight for God. They insisted on having a straight and open fight and on having the chance to die fighting. The Prophet accepted the general advice (*Ṭabaqāt*).

While this was being debated, the Prophet related a vision of his. He said, "I had a vision. I saw a cow, and I also saw my sword with its point broken. I saw the cow being butchered, and that I had put my hand inside a coat of armour. I also saw myself riding a ram." The Companions asked the Prophet how he interpreted the vision.

"The butchering of the cow" said the Prophet, "indicates that some of my Companions will be killed in battle. The broken point of my sword indicates that some important one among my relations will meet his death, or maybe, I myself will suffer pain or injury of some kind. Putting my hand in a coat of armour seems to mean that if we stay in Medina it is better for us. The fact that I have seen myself riding a ram means that we will overpower the commander of the disbelievers, and that he will die at our hands" (*Bukhārī, Hishām and Ṭabaqāt*).

It was made clear by this vision and its interpretation that it was better for Muslims to stay in Medina. The Prophet, however, did not insist upon this, because the interpretation of the vision was his own, not a part of revealed

knowledge. He accepted the advice of the majority and decided to go out of Medina to meet the enemy. As he set out, the more zealous section of His following realizing their mistake, approached the Prophet and said, "Prophet of God, the way you advised seems better. We ought to stay in Medina and meet the enemy in our streets."

"Not now," said the Prophet. "Now the Prophet of God has put on his armour. Come what may, now we shall go forward. If you prove steadfast and persevering, God will help you" (*Bukhārī* and *Ṭabaqāt*). So saying, he went forward with a force of a thousand. At a small distance from Medina they camped for the night. It was the Prophet's custom to let his fighting force rest a while before they met the enemy. At the time of the morning prayers, he made a round. He found that some Jews also had joined the Muslims. They pretended they had treaties of alliance with the Medina tribes. As the Prophet had had knowledge of Jewish intrigues, he sent off the Jews. As soon as he did so, 'Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl, chief of the hypocrites, withdrew with his three hundred followers. He said the Muslim army was now no match for the enemy. To take part in the battle was now certain death. The Prophet had made a mistake in sending off his own allies. The result of this eleventh-hour desertion was that only seven hundred Muslims were left under the Prophet's command. The seven hundred stood against an army more than four times their number, and many more times better in equipment. In the Meccan army were seven hundred fighters in armour; in the Muslim army only one hundred. The Meccans had a mounted force of two hundred horses, Muslims had only two horses. The Prophet reached Uḥud. Over a narrow hilly pass there, he posted a guard of fifty, charged with the duty of repelling any attack on it by the enemy or any attempt to possess it. The Prophet told them clearly their duty. It was to stand where they had been posted, and not to move from the spot until they were commanded to do so, no matter what happened to the Muslims. With the remaining six hundred and fifty men, the Prophet went to do battle with an army about five times as large. But, with the help of God, in a short time the six hundred and fifty Muslims drove away three thousand skilled Meccan soldiers. The Muslims ran in pursuit. The hilly pass on which fifty Muslims had been posted was in the rear. The guard said to the commander, "The enemy is beaten. It is time we took some part in the battle and won our laurels in the next world." The commander stopped them, reminding them of the clear orders of the Prophet. But the men explained that the Prophet's order was to be taken in the spirit and not in the letter. There was no meaning in continuing to guard the pass while the enemy was running for life.



### **Victory Converted into Defeat**

Arguing thus they left the pass and plunged into the battle. The fleeing Meccan army included Khālīd bin Walīd, who later became a great Muslim general. His keen eye fell on the unguarded pass. There were only a few men guarding it now. Khālīd shouted for another Meccan general ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ, and asked him to have a look at the pass behind. ‘Amr did so, and thought it the chance of his life. Both generals stopped their men and climbed on to the hill. They killed the few Muslims who were still guarding the pass and from the eminence started an attack upon the Muslims. Hearing their war cries, the routed Meccan army collected itself again, and returned to the field. The attack on the Muslims was sudden. In their pursuit of the Meccan army they had dispersed over the whole of the field. Muslim resistance to this new attack could not be assembled. Only individual Muslim soldiers were seen engaging the enemy. Many of these fell fighting. Others fell back. A few made a ring round the Prophet. They could not have been more than twenty in all. The Meccan army attacked this ring fiercely. One by one, the Muslims in the ring fell under the blows of Meccan swordsmen. From the hill, the archers sent volleys of arrows. At that time, Ṭalḥah, one of the Quraish and the Muhājirīn (Meccan Muslims who had taken refuge in Medina), saw that the enemy arrows were all directed to the face of the Prophet. He stretched out his hand and held it up against the Prophet’s face. Arrow after arrow struck Talḥah’s hand, yet it did not drop, although with each shot it was pierced through. Ultimately it was completely mutilated. Ṭalḥah lost his hand and for the rest of life went about with a stump. In the time of the Fourth *Khalīfah* of Islam when internal dissensions had raised their head, Ṭalḥah was tauntingly described by an enemy as the handless Ṭalḥah. A friend of Ṭalḥah replied, "Handless, yea, but do you know where he lost his hand? At the Battle of Uḥud, in which he raised his hand to shield the Prophet’s face from the enemy’s arrows."

Long after the Battle of Uḥud, friends of Ṭalḥah asked him, "Did not your hand smart under the arrow shots and the pain make you cry?" Ṭalḥah replied, "It made me smart, and it almost made me cry, but I resisted both because I knew that if my hand shook but slightly, it would expose the Prophet’s face to the volley of enemy arrows." The few men who were left with the Prophet could not have stood the army which they faced. A party of the enemy advanced forward and pushed them off. The Prophet then stood alone like a wall, and soon a stone struck his forehead and made a deep gash in it. Another blow drove the rings of his helmet into his cheeks. When the arrows were falling thick and fast and the Prophet was wounded he prayed, "My God, forgive my people for they know not what they are doing" (*Muslim*). The Prophet fell on the dead, the dead who had lost their lives in his defence.

Other Muslims came forward to defend the Prophet from more attacks. They also fell dead. The Prophet lay unconscious among these dead bodies. When the enemy saw this, they took him for dead. They withdrew in the certainty of victory, and proceeded to line up again. Among the Muslims who had been defending the Prophet and who had been pushed by the avalanche of enemy forces, was 'Umar. The battlefield had now cleared. 'Umar who saw this, became certain that the Prophet was dead. 'Umar was a brave man. He proved it again and again; best of all, in fighting simultaneously the great Empires of Rome and Iran. He was never known to blench under difficulties. This 'Umar sat on a stone with drooping spirits, crying like a child. In the meantime another Muslim, Anas bin Naḍr by name, came wandering along in the belief that the Muslims had won. He had seen them overpower the enemy but, having had nothing to eat since the night before, had withdrawn from the battlefield, with some dates in his hand. As soon as he saw 'Umar crying, he stood amazed and asked, "'Umar, what is the matter with you that instead of rejoicing over a magnificent victory won by the Muslims, you are crying?"

'Umar replied, "Anas, you do not know what has happened. You only saw the first part of the battle. You do not know that the enemy captured the strategic point on the hill and attacked us fiercely. The Muslims had dispersed, believing they had won. There was no resistance to this attack by the enemy. Only the Prophet with a handful of guards stood against the entire enemy and all of them fell down fighting."

"If this is true," said Anas, "what use is sitting here and crying? Where our beloved Master has gone, there must we go too."

Anas had the last date in his hand. This he was about to put in his mouth but, instead, he threw it away saying, "O date, except thee, is there anything which stands between Anas and Paradise?"

Saying this, he unsheathed his sword and flung himself into the enemy forces, one against three thousand. He could not do much, but one believing spirit is superior to many. Fighting valiantly, Anas at last fell wounded, but he continued to fight. Upon this the enemy horde sprang barbarously upon him. It is said that when the battle was over, and the dead were identified, Anas's body could not be identified. It had been cut into seventy pieces. At last a sister of Anas identifying it by a mutilated finger said, "This is my brother's body" (*Bukhārī*).

Those Muslims who made a ring round the Prophet but were driven back, ran forward again as soon as they saw the enemy withdrawing. They lifted the Prophet's body from among the dead. Abū 'Ubaidah bin al-Jarrāḥ caught between his teeth the rings which had sunk into the Prophet's cheeks and pulled them out, losing two teeth in the attempt.

After a little while, the Prophet returned to consciousness. The guards who surrounded him sent out messengers to tell Muslims to assemble again. A disrupted force began to assemble. They escorted the Prophet to the foot of the hill. Abū Sufyān, the enemy commander, seeing these Muslim remnants, cried aloud, "We have killed Muḥammad." The Prophet heard the boastful cry but forbade the Muslims to answer, lest the enemy should know the truth and attack again and the exhausted and badly-wounded Muslims should have again to fight this savage horde. Not receiving a reply from the Muslims, Abū Sufyān became certain the Prophet was dead. He followed his first cry by a second and said, "We have also killed Abū Bakr." The Prophet forbade Abū Bakr to make any reply. Abū Sufyān followed by a third, and said, "We have also killed 'Umar." The Prophet forbade 'Umar also to reply. Upon this Abū Sufyān cried that they had killed all three. Now 'Umar could not contain himself and cried, "We are all alive and, with God's grace, ready to fight you and break your heads." Abū Sufyān raised the national cry, "Glory to Hubal. Glory to Hubal. For Hubal has put an end to Islam" (Hubal was the Meccans' national idol). The Prophet could not bear this boast against the One and Only God, Allah, for Whom he and the Muslims were prepared to sacrifice their all. He had refused to correct a declaration of his own death. He had refused to correct a declaration of the death of Abū Bakr and of 'Umar for strategic reasons. Only the remnants of his small force had been left. The enemy forces were large and buoyant. But now the enemy had insulted Allah. The Prophet could not stand such an insult. His spirit was fired. He looked angrily at the Muslims who surrounded him and said, "Why stand silent and make no reply to this insult to Allah, the Only God?"

The Muslims asked, "What shall we say, O Prophet?" "Say, 'Allah alone is Great and Mighty. Allah alone is Great and Mighty. He alone is High and Honoured. He alone is High and Honoured.' "

The Muslims shouted accordingly. This cry stupefied the enemy. They stood chagrined at the thought that the Prophet after all had not died. Before them stood a handful of Muslims, wounded and exhausted. To finish them was easy enough. But they dared not attack again. Content with the sort of victory they had won, they returned making a great show of rejoicing.

In the Battle of Uḥud, Muslim victory became converted into a defeat. Nevertheless, the battle affords evidence of the truth of the Prophet. For in this battle were fulfilled the prophecies the Prophet had made before going into battle. Muslims were victorious in the beginning. The Prophet's beloved uncle, Ḥamzah, died fighting. The commander of the enemy was killed early in the action. The Prophet himself was wounded and many Muslims were

killed. All this happened as it had been foretold in the Prophet's vision.

Besides the fulfilment of the incidents told beforehand, this battle afforded many proofs of the sincerity and devotion of Muslims. So exemplary was their behaviour that history fails to provide a parallel to it. Some incidents in proof of this we have already narrated. One more seems worth narrating. It shows the certainty of conviction and devotion displayed by the Prophet's Companions. When the Prophet retired to the foot of the hill with a handful of Muslims, he sent out some of his Companions to look after the wounded lying on the field. A Companion after long search found a wounded Muslim of Medina. He was near death. The Companion bent over him and said, "Peace on you." The wounded Muslim raised a trembling hand, and holding the visitor's hand in his own, said, "I was waiting for someone to come."

"You are in a critical state," said the visitor to the soldier. "Have you anything to communicate to your relations?"

"Yes, yes," said the dying Muslim. "Say peace to my relations and tell them that while I die here, I leave behind a precious trust to be taken care of by them. That trust is the Prophet of God. I hope my relations will guard his person with their lives and remember this my only dying wish" (*Muaṭṭā* and *Zurqānī*).

Dying persons have much to say to their relations, but these early Muslims, even in their dying moments, thought not of their relations, sons, daughters or wives, nor of their property, but only of the Prophet. They faced death in the certainty that the Prophet was the saviour of the world. If their children survived, they would achieve but little, whereas if they died guarding the Prophet's person, they would have served both God and man. They believed that in sacrificing their families they served mankind and they served their God. In inviting death for them they secured life everlasting for mankind at large.

The Prophet collected the wounded and the dead. The wounded were given first aid and the dead were buried. The Prophet then learnt that the enemy had treated the Muslims most savagely, that they had mutilated the bodies of the dead Muslims and cut off a nose here and an ear there. One of the mutilated bodies was that of Ḥamzah, the Prophet's uncle. The Prophet was moved, and said, "The actions of disbelievers now justify the treatment which we so far thought was unjustified." As he said this, he was commanded by God to let the disbelievers alone and to continue to show them compassion.

### **Rumour of Prophet's Death Reaches Medina**

The rumour of the Prophet's death and the news of the dispersal of the Muslim army reached Medina, before the remnants of the Muslim force could return to the town. Women and children ran madly towards Uḥud. Many of them learnt the truth from the returning soldiers and went back. One woman of the tribe of Banū Dīnār went on until she reached Uḥud. This woman had lost her husband, father and brother in the battle. According to some narrators, she had also lost a son. A returning soldier met her and told her that her father had died. She said in reply, "I do not care for my father; tell me about the Prophet." The soldier knew the Prophet was alive, so he did not answer her query at once, but went on to tell her of her brother and husband who had also died. At each report she remained unmoved and asked again and again, "What has the Prophet of God done?" It was a strange expression to use, but when we factor that it was a woman who used it, it no longer seems so strange. A woman's emotions are strong. She often addresses a dead person as though he were alive. If that person is nearly related, she tends to make a complaint to him and ask why he is abandoning her and leaving her behind uncared for and unlooked after. It is common for women to mourn the loss of their dear ones in this way. The expression used by this woman, therefore, is appropriate to a woman grieving over the Prophet's death. This woman held the Prophet dear and refused to believe he was dead even after she had heard that he was. At the same time she did not deny the news but continued to say in true womanly grief, "What has the Prophet of God done?" By saying this she pretended the Prophet was alive, and complained that a loyal leader like him had chosen to give them all the pain of separation.

When the returning soldier found that this woman did not care about the death of her father, brother and husband, he understood the depth of her love for the Prophet and told her, "As for the Prophet, he is as you wish, fully alive." The woman asked the soldier to show her the Prophet. He pointed to one part of the field. The woman rushed to that part and reaching the Prophet, held his mantle in her hand, kissed it and said, "My father and mother be sacrificed to thee, O Prophet of God, if thou livest, I care not who else dies" (*Hishām*).

We can see, therefore, what fortitude and devotion did Muslims—both men and women—display in this battle. Christian writers narrate proudly the story of Mary Magdalene and her companions and tell us of their devotion and bravery. It is said that in the small hours of the morning they stole through the Jews and made for the tomb of Jesus. But what is this compared with the devotion of this Muslim woman of the tribe of Dīnār?

One more example is recorded in history. After the dead had been buried

and the Prophet was returning to Medina, he saw women and children who had come out of Medina to receive him. The cord of his dromedary was held by Sa'd bin Mu'adh, a chief of Medina. Sa'd was leading the dromedary pompously. He seemed to proclaim to the world that Muslims had after all succeeded in leading the Prophet back to Medina hale and hearty. As he was advancing he saw his own aged mother advancing to meet the returning party of Muslims. This aged woman was very weak-sighted. Sa'd recognized her and, turning to the Prophet, said, "Here, O Prophet, is my mother."

"Let her come forward," replied the Prophet.

The woman came forward and with a vacant look tried to spot the Prophet's face. At last she was able to spot it and was glad. The Prophet seeing her said, "Woman, I grieve over the loss of thy son."

"But," replied the devoted woman, "after I have seen you alive, I have swallowed all my misfortunes." The Arabic expression she used was "I have roasted my misfortune and swallowed it" (*Halbiyyah*, Vol. 2, p. 210). What depth of emotion does this expression indicate! Normally, grief eats up a human being, and here was an aged woman who had lost her son, a staff for her old age. But she said that, instead of letting her grief eat her up, she had eaten up her grief. The fact that her son had died for the Prophet would sustain her during the rest of her days.

The Prophet reached Medina. In this battle, many Muslims were killed and many wounded. Still the battle cannot be said to have ended in defeat for Muslims. The incidents which we have related above prove the reverse. They prove that Uhud was as great a victory for Muslims as any other. Muslims who turn to the pages of their early history can derive sustenance and inspiration from Uhud.

Back in Medina, the Prophet returned to his mission. He engaged himself again in training and teaching his followers. But as before, his work did not go on uninterruptedly. After Uhud, the Jews became more daring, and the hypocrites began to raise their heads again. They began to think that the extirpation of Islam was within their means and their competence. Only, they had to make a concerted effort. Accordingly, the Jews put to use new methods of vexation. They would publish foul abuse in verse, and in this way they would insult the Prophet and his family. Once the Prophet was called to decide a dispute and he had to go to a Jewish fortress. The Jews planned to drop a stone slab on him and thus put an end to his life. The Prophet had a forewarning of this from God. It was his wont to receive such timely warnings. The Prophet left his seat without saying anything. The Jews later admitted their foul intrigue. Muslim women were insulted in the streets. In one such incident a Muslim lost his life. On another occasion the Jews stoned a Muslim girl and she died in great pain. This behaviour of the Jews strained

their relations with Muslims and forced them to fight against the Jews. But Muslims only turned them out of Medina. One of the two Jewish tribes migrated to Syria. Of the other, some went to Syria and some settled in Khaibar, a well-fortified Jewish stronghold, to the north of Medina.

In the interval of peace between Uḥud and the next battle, the world witnessed an outstanding example of the influence of Islam on its followers. We refer to the prohibition of alcohol. In describing the condition of Arab society before Islam, we pointed out that the Arabs were confirmed drunkards. To drink five times a day was in fashion throughout Arabia. To lose oneself under the effect of drink was a common practice and of this the Arabs were not in the least ashamed. Rather they thought it was a virtue. When a guest arrived, it was the duty of the housewife to send drinks round. To wean such a people from this deadly habit was no easy matter. But in the fourth year after the Hijrah, the Prophet received the command that drinking had been forbidden. With the promulgation of this command, drinking disappeared from Muslim society. It is recorded that when the revelation making alcohol unlawful was received, the Prophet sent for a Companion and ordered him to proclaim the new command in the streets of Medina. In the house of an Anṣārī (a Muslim of Medina) a drinking party was going on. Many persons had been invited and cups of wine were being served. One large pot had been consumed and a second one was going to be broached. Many had lost their senses, and many more were on the way to lose them. In this condition they heard someone proclaim that drinking had been forbidden by the Prophet under a command of God. One of the party stood up and said, "It looks like a proclamation against drinking; let us find out if this is so." Another stood up, struck the earthen pot full of wine with his staff, broke it to pieces and said, "First obey, then inquire. It is enough that we have heard of such a proclamation. It is not meet that we should go on drinking while we make inquiries. It is rather our duty to let the wine flow in the street and then inquire about the proclamation" (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim, Kitābul-Ashribah*). This Muslim was right. For, if drinking had been forbidden, they would have been guilty of an offence, had they gone on drinking. On the other hand, if drinking had not been forbidden, they would not lose much if for once they should let the wine in their pots flow into the streets. Drinking disappeared from the entire Muslim society after this proclamation. No special effort or campaign was needed to bring about this revolutionary change. Muslims who heard this command and witnessed the ready response with which it was received lived up to seventy or eighty years. No case is known of any Muslim who, having heard of this prohibition, showed the weakness of offending against it. If there was any such case, it must have been of one who did not have the chance to come under the direct influence of the Prophet. Compare with this the

prohibition movement of America and of the efforts to promote temperance which have been made for so many years in Europe. In the one case a simple proclamation by the Prophet was enough to obliterate a social evil rooted deep in Arab society. In the other, prohibition was enacted by special laws. Police and the army, custom officials and excise inspectors, all exerted themselves as a team and tried to put down the evil of drinking but failed and had to confess their failure. The drunkards won and the evil of drinking could not be defeated. Ours is said to be an age of social progress. But when we compare our age with the age of early Islam, we wonder which of the two deserves this title—this age of ours or the age in which Islam brought about this great social revolution?

What happened at Uḥud was not liable to be easily forgotten. The Meccans thought Uḥud was their first victory against Islam. They published the news all over Arabia and used it to excite the Arab tribes against Islam and to persuade them that Muslims were not invincible. If they continued to prosper, it was not because of any strength of their own but because of the weakness of Arab orthodoxy. It was due to the weakness of Arab idolaters. If the Arab idolaters made a concerted effort, to overpower the Muslims was not a difficult business. The result of this propaganda was that hostility against Muslims began to gather strength. The other Arab tribes began to outstrip the Meccans in harassing the Muslims. Some began to attack them openly. Some began to inflict losses upon them surreptitiously. In the fourth year after the Hijrah, two Arab tribes, the ‘Aḍl and the Qāra, sent their representatives to the Holy Prophet to submit that many of their men were inclined towards Islam. They requested the Prophet to send to them some Muslims well-versed in the teaching of Islam, to live among them and teach them the New Religion. Actually this was an intrigue hatched by the Banū Liḥyān, arch-enemy of Islam. They sent these delegates to the Prophet under promise of a rich reward. The Prophet received the request unsuspectingly and sent ten Muslims to teach the tribes the tenets and principles of Islam. When this party reached the territory of the Banū Liḥyān, their escorts had the news delivered to the tribesmen and invited them to arrest the party or to put them to death. On this vicious suggestion, two hundred armed men of the Banū Liḥyān set out in pursuit of the Muslim party and overtook them at last at a spot called Rajī‘. An encounter took place between ten Muslims and two hundred of the enemy. The Muslims were full of faith. The enemy was without any. The ten Muslims climbed up an eminence and challenged the two hundred. The enemy tried to overpower the Muslims by vile intrigue. They offered to spare them if only they would come down. But the party chief replied that they had seen enough of the promises made by disbelievers. So saying, they turned to God and prayed. God was well aware of their plight. Was it not meet that He



should inform their Prophet of this? When the disbelievers found the small party of Muslims adamant, they launched their attack upon them. The party fought without thought of defeat. Seven of the ten fell fighting. To the three who remained the disbelievers renewed their promise to spare their lives, on condition that they should come down from the eminence. These three believed the disbelievers and surrendered. As soon as they did so, the disbelievers tied them up. One of the three said, "This is the first breach of your plighted word. God only knows what you will do next." Saying this, he refused to go with them. The disbelievers started belabouring the victim and dragging him down the way. But they were so infuriated by the resistance and determination shown by this one man that they murdered him on the spot. The other two they took with them and sold them as slaves to the Quraish of Mecca. One of the two was Khubaib, the other Zaid. The purchaser of Khubaib wanted to murder him so as to avenge his own father, who had been killed at Badr. One day, Khubaib asked for a razor to complete his toilet. Khubaib was holding the razor when a child of the household approached him out of curiosity. Khubaib took the child and put him on his knee. The child's mother saw this and became terrified. Her mind was full of guilty feelings, and here was a man whom they were going to murder in a few days holding a razor so dangerously near their child. She was convinced that Khubaib was going to murder the child. Khubaib saw the consternation on the face of the woman and said, "Do you imagine I am going to murder your child. Do not think so for a moment. I cannot do such a foul thing. Muslims do not play false."

The woman was impressed by the honest and straightforward bearing and behaviour of Khubaib. She remembered this ever afterwards and used to say she had never seen a prisoner like Khubaib. At last the Meccans led Khubaib to an open field to celebrate his murder in public. When the appointed moment came, Khubaib asked for leave to say two *Rak'ats* of prayer. The Quraish agreed and Khubaib addressed in public view his last prayers to God in this world. When he had finished praying, he said he wanted to continue, but did not do so lest they should think he was afraid of dying. Then he quietly submitted his neck to the executioner. As he did so, he hummed the verses:

While I die a Muslim, I care not whether my headless body drops to the right or to the left. And why should I? My death is in the way of God; if He wills, He can bless every part of my dismembered body (*Bukhārī*).

Khubaib had hardly finished murmuring these verses when the executioner's sword fell on his neck and his head fell to one side. Those who had assembled to celebrate this public murder included one Sa'īd bin 'Āmir

who later became a Muslim. It is said that whenever the murder of Khubaib was related in Sa'īd's presence, he would go into a fit (*Hishām*). The second prisoner, Zaid, was also taken out to be murdered. Among the spectators was Abū Sufyān, chief of Mecca. Abū Sufyān turned to Zaid and asked, "Would you not rather have Muḥammad in your place? Would you not prefer to be safe at home while Muḥammad was in our hands?"

Zaid replied proudly, "What, Abū Sufyān? What do you say? By God, I would rather die, than that the Prophet should tread on a thorn in a street in Medina." Abū Sufyān could not help being impressed by such devotion. He looked at Zaid in amazement and declared unhesitatingly, but in measured tones, "God is my witness, I have not known anyone love another as much as the Companions of Muḥammad love Muḥammad" (*Hishām*, Vol. 2).

About this time some people of Najd also approached the Prophet for Muslims to teach them Islam. The Prophet did not trust them. But Abū Barā', chief of the 'Āmir tribe, happened to be in Medina at the time. He offered to act as surety for the tribe and assured the Prophet that they would commit no mischief. The Prophet selected seventy Muslims who knew the Quran by heart. When this party reached Bi'r Ma'ūnah one of them, Ḥarām bin Malḥān went to the chief of the 'Āmir tribe (a nephew of Barā') to give him the Message of Islam. Apparently Ḥarām was well received by the tribesmen. But while he was addressing the chief, a man stole up from behind and attacked Ḥarām with a lance. Ḥarām died on the spot. As the lance pierced through Ḥarām's neck, he was heard saying, "God is the Greatest. The Lord of the Ka'bah is my witness, I have attained my goal" (*Bukhārī*). Having murdered Ḥarām in this foul manner, the tribal leaders provoked the tribe into an attack upon the rest of this party of Muslim teachers. "But," said the tribesmen, "Our chief, Abū Barā', offered to act as surety; we cannot attack this party." Then the tribal chiefs, with the assistance of the two tribes who had gone to the Prophet to ask for Muslim teachers and some other tribes, attacked the Muslim party. The simple appeal, "We have come to preach and to teach, not to fight," had no effect. They started murdering the party. All but three of the seventy were murdered. One of the survivors was lame and had climbed a hill before the encounter began. Two others had gone to a wood to feed their camels. On returning from the wood they found sixty-six of their companions lying dead on the field. The two counselled together. Said one, "We should go and make a report of this to the Holy Prophet."

Said the other, "I cannot leave a spot where the chief of our party, whom our Prophet appointed our leader, has been murdered." So saying, he sprang single-handed upon the disbelievers and died fighting. The other was taken prisoner but was later released in fulfilment of a vow which the tribal chief had taken. The murdered party included 'Āmir bin Fuhairah, a freedman of

Abū Bakr. His murderer was one Jabbār who later became a Muslim. Jabbār attributed his conversion to this mass massacre of Muslims.

"When I started murdering 'Āmir," says Jabbār, "I heard 'Āmir say, 'By God I have met my goal' I asked someone why a Muslim said this sort of thing when he was meeting his death. That person explained that Muslims regarded death in the path of God as a blessing and a victory." Jabbār was so impressed by this reply, that he started making a systematic study of Islam, and ultimately became a Muslim (*Hishām* and *Usdul-Ghābbah*).

The news of the two sad events, in which about eighty Muslims lost their lives as the result of a mischievous intrigue, reached Medina simultaneously. These were no ordinary men who were murdered. They were bearers of the Quran. They had committed no crime and had harmed nobody. They were taking part in no battle. They had been decoyed into enemy hands by a lie told in the name of God and religion. These facts proved conclusively that enmity to Islam was determined and deep. On the other hand the zeal of Muslims for Islam was equally determined and deep.

### **Encounter with Banū Muṣṭaliq**

After the Battle of Uḥud, there was a severe famine at Mecca. Disregarding all enmity which the Meccans bore against him, and disregarding all machinations which they had been employing to spread disaffection against him throughout the country, the Prophet raised a fund to help the poor of Mecca in their dire need. The Meccans remained unimpressed even by this expression of goodwill. Their hostility went on unabated. In fact it became worse. Tribes which had so far been sympathetic towards Muslims also became hostile. One such tribe was Banū Muṣṭaliq. They had good relations with Muslims. But now they had started preparing for an attack on Medina. When the Prophet heard of their preparations he sent men to find out the truth. The men returned and confirmed the reports. The Prophet decided to go and meet this new attack. Accordingly, he raised a force and led it to the territory of Banū Muṣṭaliq. When the Muslim force met the enemy, the Prophet tried to persuade the enemy to withdraw without fighting. They refused. Battle was joined and in a few hours the enemy was defeated.

Because the Meccan disbelievers were bent upon mischief and friendly tribes were turning hostile, the hypocrites among Muslims had also ventured on this occasion to take part in the battle on the Muslim side. They probably thought they might have a chance to do some mischief. The encounter with Banū Muṣṭaliq was over in a few hours. The hypocrites, therefore, did not have any chance to do any mischief during the battle. The Holy Prophet, however, decided to stay in the town of Banū Muṣṭaliq for a few days. During his stay, a quarrel arose between a Meccan and a Medinite Muslim over

drawing water from a well. The Meccan happened to be an ex-slave. He struck the Medinite, who raised an alarm, crying out for fellow-Meditines—known as the Anṣār or Helpers. The Meccan also raised an alarm and cried out for fellow-Meccans—known as the Muhājirīn or Refugees. Excitement prevailed. Nobody inquired what had happened. Young men on both sides drew their swords. ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl thought it a Godsend. He decided to add fuel to the fire. "You have gone too far in your indulgence to the Refugees. Your good treatment of them has turned their heads, and now they are trying to dominate you in every way." The speech might have had the effect which ‘Abdullāh desired. The quarrel might have assumed serious proportions. But it did not. ‘Abdullāh was wrong in assessing the effect of his mischievous speech. Believing, however, that the Anṣār were being persuaded, he went so far as to say:

Let us return to Medina. Then will the most honoured among its citizens turn out the most despised (*Bukhārī*).

By the most honoured citizen, he meant himself and by the most despised he meant the Prophet. As soon as he said this, believing Muslims were able to see through the mischief. It was not an innocent speech they had listened to, they said, but the speech of Satan who had come to lead them astray. A young man stood up and reported to the Prophet through his uncle. The Prophet sent for ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl and his friends and asked them what had happened. ‘Abdullāh and his friends denied that they had taken any such part as had been attributed to them in this incident. The Prophet said nothing. But the truth began to spread. In the course of time ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl’s own son, ‘Abdullāh, also heard about it. Young ‘Abdullāh at once saw the Prophet, and said, "O Prophet, my father has insulted you. Death is his punishment. If you decide so, I would rather have you command me to kill my father. If you command someone else, and my father dies at his hands, I may be led to avenge my father by killing that man. Maybe I incur the displeasure of God in this way."

"But," said the Prophet, "I have no such intention. I will treat your father with compassion and consideration." When young ‘Abdullāh compared the disloyalty and discourtesy of his father with the compassion and kindness of the Prophet, he made for Medina full of suppressed anger against his father. He stopped his father on the way and said he would not let him go any farther on the road to Medina until he had withdrawn the words he had used against the Prophet. "The lips which said, 'The Prophet is despised and you are honoured,' must now say, 'The Prophet is honoured and you are despised.' Until you say this I will not let you go." ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy ibn Salūl was astonished and frightened and said, "I agree, my son, that Muḥammad is

honoured and that I am despised." Young 'Abdullāh then let his father go (*Hishām*, Vol. 2).

We have mentioned before two Jewish tribes who had to be banished out of Medina on account of their mischievous machinations and murderous intrigues. Banū Naḍīr, one of the two, migrated partly to Syria, partly to a town called Khaibar in the north of Medina. Khaibar was a well-fortified Jewish centre in Arabia. The Jews, who had migrated there, began to excite the Arabs against Muslims. The Meccans were already sworn enemies of Islam. No fresh provocation was needed to excite the Meccans against Muslims. Similarly the Ghaṭafān of Najd, because of their friendly relations with the Meccans, were hostile to Muslims. The Jews settled in Khaibar already counted on the Quraish of Mecca and the Ghaṭafān of Najd. Besides these, they planned to turn Banū Sulaim and Banū Asad against Islam. They also persuaded Banū Sa'd, a tribe in alliance with the Jews, to join the Meccans in an alliance against Islam. After a long intrigue a confederacy of Arab tribes was organized to fight the Muslims. This included the Meccans, the tribes living in territories around Mecca, the tribes of Najd, and those living in territories to the north of Medina.

### **Battle of The Ditch**

A large army was raised in the fifth year of the Hijrah. The strength of this army has been estimated by historians as between ten and twenty-four thousand men. But a confederated army raised out of the different tribes of Arabia could not be an army of ten thousand. Twenty-four thousand seems nearer the truth. It could easily have been eighteen or twenty thousand. The town of Medina which this horde wished to attack was a modest one, quite unable to resist a concerted attack by all Arabia. Its population at this time was little more than three thousand males (including old men, young men and children). Against this population the enemy had raised an army of twenty to twenty-four thousand able-bodied men, experienced in warfare; and (having been assembled from different parts of the country) they were an army with a well-selected personnel. The population of Medina, on the other hand, which could be called upon to resist this huge army included males of all ages. One can judge the odds against which the Muslim population of Medina had to contend. It was a most unequal encounter. The enemy was twenty to twenty-four thousand strong, and Muslims hardly three thousand including, as we have said, all the males of the town, the old and the young. When the Prophet heard of the huge enemy preparations, he held a council and asked for advice. Among those who were consulted was Salmān the Persian, the first Muslim convert from Persia. The Prophet asked Salmān what they did in Persia if they had to defend a town against a huge army. "If a town is unfortified, and the

home force very small," said Salmān, "the custom in our country is to dig a ditch round the town and to defend from inside." The Prophet approved of the idea. Medina has hills on one side. These provided a natural protection on that side. Another side with a concentration of lanes had a compact population. On this side the town could not be attacked unawares. The third side had houses and palm-groves and, at some distance, the fortresses of the Jewish tribe, Banū Quraizah. The Banū Quraizah had signed a pact of peace with the Muslims. Therefore this side was also considered safe from enemy attack. The fourth side was an open plain and it was from this side that the enemy attack was most likely and most feared. The Prophet, therefore, decided to dig a ditch on this open side so as to prevent the enemy from attacking unawares. The task was shared among Muslims—ten men were to dig ten yards of the ditch. Altogether a mile long ditch, of sufficient width and depth, had to be dug.

When the digging was going on, they came upon a rock which Muslim sappers found hard to tackle. A report was sent to the Prophet who made for the spot at once. Taking a pickaxe he struck the rock hard. Sparks came out and the Prophet cried aloud "*Allāhu Akbar*". He struck again. Again a light came out and again the Prophet cried out, "*Allāhu Akbar*". He struck a third time. Light came out again, the Prophet said, "*Allāhu Akbar*" and the rock was in fragments. The Companions asked the Prophet about all this. Why did he say, "*Allāhu Akbar*" again and again?

"I struck this rock three times with this pickaxe, and three times did I see scenes of the future glory of Islam revealed to me. In the first sparks I saw the Syrian palaces of the Roman Empire. I had the keys of those palaces given to me. The second time I saw the illumined palaces of Persia at Madā'in, and had the keys of the Persian Empire given to me. The third time, I saw the gates of San'ā and I had the keys of the Kingdom of Yemen given to me. These are the promises of God and I trust you will put reliance in them. The enemy can do you no harm" (*Zurqānī*, Vol. 2).

With their limited man-power, the ditch which the Muslims were able to dig could not be a perfect one from the point of view of military strategy, but it at least seemed to ensure against the sudden entry of the enemy into the town. That it was not impassable, subsequent events in the battle amply proved. No other side suited the enemy from which to attack the town.

From the side of the ditch, therefore, the huge army of Arabian tribesmen began to approach Medina. As soon as the Prophet got to know of this, he came out to defend it with twelve hundred men, having posted other men to defend other parts of the town.

Historians estimate differently the number which defended the ditch. Some put it at three thousand, others at twelve to thirteen hundred, still others at seven hundred. These estimates are very different and apparently difficult to reconcile. But, after weighing the evidence, we have come to the conclusion that all the three estimates of the Muslim numbers engaged in defending the ditch are correct. They relate to different stages of the battle.

### **Fight Against Heavy Odds**

We have already agreed that, after the withdrawal of the hypocrites at Uḥud, the number of Muslims left in the field was seven hundred. The Battle of the Ditch took place only two years after the Battle of Uḥud. During these two years, no large accessions to Islam are recorded in history. An increase during this time in the number of combatant Muslims from seven hundred to three thousand is not to be expected. At the same time, it does not stand to reason that between Uḥud and the Ditch there was no rise in the number of combatant Muslims. Islam continued to add to its numbers and we should expect some increase between the Battle of Uḥud and the Battle of the Ditch. From these two considerations, it seems to follow that the estimate which puts the number of Muslim combatants in the Battle of the Ditch at one thousand two hundred is correct. The only question to be answered is, why some authorities put the number at three thousand and some at seven hundred. Our answer to this question is that the two figures relate to two different stages of the battle. The Battle of the Ditch was fought in three stages. We had the first stage before the enemy had come near to Medina, and Muslims were engaged in digging the ditch. During this time, we may well assume that in removing the excavated earth to a distance, children and, to some extent even women must have come in to assist. In the digging of the trench we may, therefore, assume that there were altogether three thousand souls employed on the Muslim side. The number included children and some women. The children were able to help in carrying the earth, and women who always vied with the men in helping all Muslim campaigns, must have been useful in doing many ancillary jobs connected with the digging. There is evidence to support this assumption. When the digging started, even children were asked to come. Practically the whole population took part in the digging. But as soon as the enemy arrived and the battle began, the Prophet ordered boys under fifteen to withdraw from the scene of operations. Those above fifteen were allowed to take part if they were so minded (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2). From this it appears that at the time of digging, Muslim numbers were much larger than when the battle began. At the time of the battle the very young boys had all withdrawn. Estimates which put the Muslim numbers in the battle at three thousand relate only to the digging, and those which put the figure at one thousand two

hundred relate to the actual battle in which only grown-up males took part. The only estimate we have not accounted for is that which puts the figure at seven hundred. Even this estimate, according to us, is correct. It has been proposed by as reliable an authority as Ibn Ishāq, who is supported in this estimate by no less a person than Ibn Ḥazm. It is difficult to question this estimate. Fortunately, when we turn to the other details of the battle, even this estimate turns out to be correct. There is evidence to show that when the Banū Quraizah, against their plighted word, joined the enemy, and decided to attack Medina in the rear, the Holy Prophet, having been apprised of their evil intention, decided to post guards in the part of the town exposed to the attack of Banū Quraizah. This part of Medina had originally been left undefended because the Banū Quraizah were in alliance with Muslims. And it was assumed that they would not let the enemy attack the town from their side. It is known that when the defection of the Banū Quraizah was reported to the Prophet and it became evident that Muslim women, considered safe in this part of the town because of the alliance, were no longer safe, the Prophet decided to send two forces, of two and three hundred men, to guard two different parts of the now exposed town. The Prophet ordered them to raise occasional cries of "*Allāhu Akbar*", so that the main Muslim forces should know that the Muslim women were safe. The estimate of Ibn Ishāq, therefore, which puts the number of combatants in the Battle of the Ditch at seven hundred, is also correct. If five hundred men out of one thousand two hundred were sent to guard the rear of the town, only seven hundred could remain. Thus all the three estimates of the number of the Muslim army in the Battle of the Ditch turn out to be correct.

To defend the ditch, therefore, the Holy Prophet had only seven hundred men. True, the ditch had been dug. But to face and to repel an army as large as the enemy had, even with the help of the ditch seemed well-nigh impossible. But as usual Muslims trusted their God and relied on His help. Their small force waited for the enemy host, while the women and children had been sent to two apparently safe parts of the town. When the enemy reached the ditch, they were amazed because this stratagem had never been used before in any Arab battle. So they decided to camp on their side of the ditch and to deliberate over methods of attacking and entering Medina. One side was protected by the ditch. A second side had hills with their natural protection. A third side had stone houses and groves of trees. It was impossible for the enemy to make any sudden attack on any part of the town. The enemy commanders took counsel together and decided that it was necessary to try to wean the Banū Quraizah, the Jewish tribe, still living in Medina, from their alliance with the Muslims and ask them to join the Arab confederates in this critical onslaught against Medina. Only the Banū Quraizah could give them a



way to the town. At last Abū Sufyān selected Ḥuyaī bin Akḥṭab, chief of the banished tribe of Banū Naḍīr and principal instigator of Arab tribes against Medina, and appointed him to negotiate with the Banū Quraizah for facilities to attack the town from the rear. Ḥuyaī bin Akḥṭab went to the Jewish fortress to see the leader of the Banū Quraizah. At first they refused to see him. But when he explained that this was a very opportune moment to defeat the Muslims, he succeeded in winning over one of the Quraizites, Ka'b. He explained that all Arabia had turned out to attack and destroy the Muslims. The army which stood at the other side of the ditch was not an army, but an ocean of able-bodied men whom the Muslims could not possibly resist. Ultimately it was agreed that as soon as the army of disbelievers succeeded in forcing the ditch, the Banū Quraizah would attack that part of Medina to which the Holy Prophet had sent all the women and children for safety. This plan, it was believed, would smash the Muslim resistance, and prove a death-trap for their entire population—men, women and children. If this plan had met with even partial success, it would have cost the Muslims dear and made things very difficult for them. They would have had no escape from this death-trap.

### **Treachery of Banū Quraizah**

The Banū Quraizah, as we have said, were in alliance with the Muslims. Even if they had not joined the battle on the Muslim side, it was expected that they would at least bar the way of the enemy on their side. The Prophet, therefore, had left that part of the town entirely unguarded. The Banū Quraizah knew that the Muslims trusted their good faith. So when they decided to join the Arabs, it was agreed that they would not join them openly lest the Muslims should become alert and take steps to guard the part of the town on the side of the Banū Quraizah. It was a very dangerous plot.

When it was agreed that Muslims were to be attacked from two sides, the Arab army started assailing the ditch. A few days passed, however, and nothing happened. Then they hit upon the idea of posting their archers on an eminence and ordering them to attack parties of Muslims defending the ditch. These stood on the edge separated by short intervals. As soon as the Muslim defence showed any signs of breaking, the disbelievers would try to cross the ditch with the help of their first-rate horsemen. They believed that when such attacks were repeated, they would obtain possession of a point on the Muslim side of the ditch at which they would be able to land their forces for a full-fledged attack on the town. Attack after attack was therefore made. Muslim defenders had to fight ceaselessly. One day they were kept so engaged in repelling these attacks that some of the daily prayers could not be said at the appointed time. The Prophet was grieved over this and said, "God punish the

infidels, they have upset our prayers." The incident shows the intensity of the enemy attack. But it also shows that the Prophet's first and last concern was the worship of God. Medina had been beleaguered on all sides. Not only men, but also women and children were faced with certain death. The whole of the town was in the grip of anxiety. But the Prophet still thought of holding the daily prayers at their appointed hours. Muslims do not worship God only once a week, as do Christians and Hindus. Muslims are required to worship five times a day. During a battle, to hold even one public prayer is difficult, not to speak of holding five prayers a day in congregation. But the Prophet convened the five daily prayers even during battle. If one of these prayers was upset by enemy attack, it pained him.

To return to the battle, the enemy was attacking from the front, the Banū Quraizah were planning to attack from the rear but not in such a way as to make the Muslim population alert. They wanted to enter the town from behind and to kill the women and children sheltered there. One day the Banū Quraizah sent a spy to find out whether guards had been posted for the protection of women and children and, if so, in what strength. There was a special enclosure for families which the enemy regarded as their special target. The spy came and began to hover round this enclosure and to look about suspiciously. While he was doing so, Ṣafīyyah, an aunt of the Prophet, spotted him. Only one male adult happened to be on guard duty at the time and even he was ill. Ṣafīyyah reported to him what she had seen and suggested he should lay hand on this spy before he was able to inform the enemy how unprotected the women and children were in that part of the town. The sick Muslim refused to do anything upon which Ṣafīyyah herself picked up a staff and began to fight this undesirable visitor. With the help of other women she succeeded in overpowering and killing him. Later it was proved that this man was really an agent of the Banū Quraizah. Muslims became nervous and began to apprehend other attacks from this side which they had so far thought quite safe. But the attack from the front was so heavy that the whole of the Muslim force was needed to resist it. Nevertheless, the Prophet decided to spare a part of the force for the protection of women and children. As we have said in our discussion of the Muslim numbers in this battle, out of twelve hundred men, the Prophet sent five hundred for the protection of women in the town. For the defence of the ditch, therefore, only seven hundred men were left to fight an army of between eighteen and twenty thousand. Many Muslims were unnerved at the odds which they had to face. They went to the Prophet and said how critical the situation was, and how impossible it seemed to save the town. They requested the Prophet to pray. They also requested him to teach them a special prayer for this occasion. The Prophet replied, "Have no fear. Only pray to God that He should protect you

from your weaknesses, strengthen your hearts, and relieve your anxiety." The Prophet prayed himself in the following words:

God, Thou hast sent to me the Quran. Thou waitest not to call anyone to account. These hordes which have come to attack us, give them defeat. God, I beseech thee again: Defeat them, make us dominate over them, and upset all their evil intentions (*Bukhārī*).

And again:

God, Thou hearest those who cry to Thee in misery and in affliction. Thou repliest to those who are stricken with anxiety. Relieve me of my pain, my anxiety, and my fear. Thou knowest what odds I and my Companions are up against (*Zurqānī*).

The hypocrites became more nervous than others in the Muslim force. All regard for the honour of their side and the safety of their town, their women and children, disappeared from their hearts. But they did not want to be disgraced in the presence of their own side. Therefore, they began to desert the Muslims one by one on slender excuses. The Quran refers to this in 33:14.

And a section of them even asked leave of the Prophet, saying, 'Our houses are exposed and defenceless.' And they were not exposed. They only sought to flee away.

The state of battle at the moment, and the condition in which the Muslims stood at the time is described in the Quran in the following verses:

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when your eyes became distracted, and the hearts reached to the throats, and you thought diverse thoughts about Allah. Then were the believers sorely tried, and they were shaken with a violent shaking. And when the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts was a disease said, 'Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion'. And when a party of them said, 'O people of Yathrib, you have possibly no stand against the enemy, therefore turn back' (33:11-14).

Here Muslims are reminded how they were attacked from the front by a confederacy of Arab tribes, and in the rear by the Jews. They are reminded how miserable they were at that time. Their eyes flinched and their hearts were in their mouths. They even began to entertain doubts about God. The believers were then on trial. They were all given a shaking. The hypocrites and the spiritually diseased began to say, 'We have all been fooled by false promises made to us by God and His Prophet!' A party of them even began to unnerve the Muslim force saying, 'There is no fighting now. There is nothing to do but to go back.'

How true believers behaved on this occasion is also described in the Quran:

And when the believers saw the confederates, they said, 'This is what Allah and His Messenger promised us; and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth.' And it only increased them in faith and submission. Among the believers are men who have been true to the covenant they had made with Allah. There are some of them who have fulfilled their vow, and some who still wait, and they have not changed their condition in the least (33:23, 24).

The true believers, that is to say, were unlike the hypocrites and the weak. When they saw the huge numbers of the enemy, they were reminded of what God and His Prophet had told them already. This concerted attack by the tribes of Arabia was proof only of the truth of God and the Prophet. The true believers remained unshaken. Rather they increased in the spirit of obedience and in the fervour of faith. The true believers stood by their compact with God. Some of them had already attained to the goal of their lives by meeting their death. Some were only waiting to die in the path of God and reach their goal.

The enemy attacked the ditch fiercely and uninterruptedly. Sometimes he succeeded in clearing it. One day, important generals of the enemy succeeded in going across. But they were attacked so bravely by the Muslims that they had to fall back. In this encounter, Naufal, a big leader of the disbelievers, lost his life. So big was this leader that the disbelievers thought they would not be able to stand any insult to his dead body. They, therefore, sent word to the Prophet, that if he would return the body of this chief, they would pay ten thousand dirhams. It was a high price for the return of the dead body. The offer was made out of a sense of guilt. The disbelievers had mutilated the Muslim dead at Uḥud and were afraid that Muslims would do the same. But the teaching of Islam was different. Islam forbade outright the mutilation of the dead. When the Prophet received the message and the offer, he said, "What use have we for this body? We want nothing in return for this. If it please you, take away the body" (*Zurqānī*, Vol. 2, p. 114).

A passage in Muir's *The Life of Mahomet* (London-1878, p. 322) describes eloquently the fierceness of the attack on Muslims. We need not apologize for quoting it here:

Next morning, Mahomet found the whole force of the Allies drawn out against him. It required the utmost activity and an unceasing vigilance on his side to frustrate the manoeuvres of the enemy. Now they would threaten a general assault; then breaking up into divisions they would attack various posts in rapid and distracting succession; and at last, watching their opportunity, they would mass their troops on the

least protected point, and, under cover of a sustained and galling discharge of arrows, attempt to force the trench. Over and again a gallant dash was made at the city, and at the tent of Mahomet, by such leaders of renown as Khalid and Amru; and these were only repelled by constant counter-marches and unremitting archery. This continued throughout the day; and, as the army of Mahomet was but just sufficient to guard the long line, there could be no relief. Even at night Khalid, with a strong party of horses, kept up the alarm, and still threatening the line of defence, rendered outposts at frequent intervals necessary. But all the endeavours of the enemy were without effect. The trench was not crossed.

The battle had gone on for two days. Still there had been no hand-to-hand fighting, no great bloodshed. Twenty-four hours of fighting had resulted in only three deaths on the enemy side and five on the Muslim side. Sa'd bin Mu'adh, a chief of the Aus tribe and a devotee of the Prophet, was wounded. Repeated attacks on the ditch, however, resulted in some damage, and this made further attack easier. Great scenes of valour and of loyalty were witnessed. It was a cold night, perhaps the coldest in Arabia. We have on the authority of 'Ā'ishah, the Prophet's holy consort, that the Prophet rose from his sleep again and again to guard the damaged part of the ditch. He became exhausted. He returned to bed but then, having warmed himself a little, went again to guard the ditch. One day he was so exhausted that he seemed quite unable to move. Then he said he wished some devoted Muslim would come and relieve him of the physical labour of guarding the ditch in the cold of the night. Soon he heard a voice. It was Sa'd bin Waqqāṣ. The Prophet asked him why he had come.

"To guard your person," said Sa'd.

"There is no need to guard my person," said the Prophet "A part of the ditch is damaged. Go and guard it that Muslims may be safe." Sa'd went, and the Prophet was able to sleep. (There was some coincidence. For when the Prophet arrived at Medina and danger to his person was very great, even then it was Sa'd who offered himself for a guard.) On another occasion during these difficult days, the Prophet heard the sound of arms. "Who is it?" asked the Prophet. "Ibād bin Bishr," was the reply.

"Have you anyone else with you?" asked the Prophet. "Yes," said 'Ibād, "A party of Companions. We will guard your tent."

"Leave my tent alone. The disbelievers are trying to cross the ditch. Go and fight them" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2).

As we said before, the Jews tried to enter the town surreptitiously. A Jewish spy lost his life in the effort. When they found that their intrigue had

become known, they began to help the Arab confederates more openly. A concerted attack in the rear, however, was not attempted, because the field on this side was narrow and with the posting of the Muslim guards a large-scale attack had become impossible. But a few days later, the Jews and pagan confederates decided to make a simultaneous and sudden attack upon the Muslims.

### **The Confederates Disperse**

This dangerous plan, however, was foiled by God in a miraculous manner. It happened in this way. One Nu'aim, who belonged to the tribe of Ghaṭafān, became inclined towards Islam. He had come with the pagan armies but looked for an opportunity to help the Muslims. Alone, he could not do much. But when he saw that Jews had made common cause with the Arabs, and Muslims seemed faced with certain death and destruction, Nu'aim made up his mind to do what he could to save the Muslims. He went to the Banū Quraizah, and talked to their chiefs. If the Arab armies ran away, what did they expect Muslims would do? The Jews being in compact with the Muslims, should they not be ready for punishment due to those who prove false to a compact? The interrogation frightened the Jewish leaders. They asked him what they should do. Nu'aim advised them to ask for seventy pagans as hostages. If the pagans were honest about a concerted attack they would not refuse the request. They should say that these seventy would guard their strategic points, while they themselves attacked the Muslims from the rear. After his talks with the Jews he went to the pagan leaders. He asked them what they would do if the Jews went back on their compact; if, to conciliate the Muslims they asked for pagan hostages and then handed them over to the Muslims. Was it not important for them to test the honesty of the Jews and ask them to participate in the common attack at once? The pagan chiefs were impressed by this advice. Acting upon it, they sent word to the Jews asking them whether they would not attack the town from the rear now that they (the confederates) were ready for the planned attack. The Jews replied that the following day was their Sabbath and they could not fight on that day. Secondly, they said, they belonged to Medina, and the Arab confederates were all outsiders. Should the Arabs flee from the battle, what were the Jews going to do? The Arabs should, therefore, give seventy men as hostages. The Jews would then be ready to carry out their part of the attack. Suspicion was already at work. The Arabs refused to entertain the Jewish request. If the Jews were honest in their compact with the Arabs, there was no meaning in the sort of proposal which they had made. Suspicion being subversive of courage, the Arab armies lost their zeal, and when night came, went to sleep burdened with doubts and difficulties. Both officers and men repaired to their tents in

depressed mood. Then a miracle happened, help coming from heaven to the Muslims. A keen wind began to blow. Tent walls were swept away. Cooking pots toppled over fires. Some fires were extinguished. The pagans believed in keeping alive a fire throughout the night. A blazing camp-fire was a good omen, an extinguished one a bad omen. When a fire in front of a tent became extinguished, the occupants thinking it a bad augury, would withdraw from the battle for the day, and join again. The pagan leaders were already stricken with doubts. When some campers packed away, others thought that the Muslims had made a night attack. The suggestion became contagious. They all started packing and withdrawing from the field. It is said that Abū Sufyān was asleep in his tent. News of the sudden withdrawal of the pagan divisions reached his ears. He got up agitated and, in excitement, mounted a tethered camel. He spurred the animal, but the animal would not move. His friends pointed to what he was doing, untied the animal, and Abū Sufyān with his friends was able to leave the field.

Two-thirds of the night had passed. The battle-field had cleared already. An army of between twenty and twenty-five thousand soldiers and followers disappeared, leaving a complete wilderness behind. Just at that time the Prophet had a revelation that the enemy had fled as the result of an act of God. To find out what had happened the Prophet wanted to send one of his followers to scan the battlefield and make a report. The weather was icy cold. Little wonder, the ill-clad Muslims were freezing. Some heard the Prophet's voice when he called out in the night. They wanted to reply, but could not. The cold was forbidding. Only Ḥudhaifah was able to say aloud, "Yes, Prophet of God, what do you want us to do?"

The Prophet called out again. Again nobody could answer because of the cold. Only Ḥudhaifah answered again. The Prophet asked Ḥudhaifah to go and survey the battle-field, for God had informed him that the enemy had fled. Ḥudhaifah went near the ditch, and from there saw that the enemy had vacated the field. There were no soldiers and no men. Ḥudhaifah returned to the Prophet, recited the Kalimah and said the enemy had fled. On the morrow Muslims also unpegged their tents and started packing for the city. A severe trial lasting for about twenty days had ended.

### **Banū Quraizah Punished**

Muslims were able to breathe again in peace. But they still had the Banū Quraizah to settle with. The Banū Quraizah had dishonoured their pact with the Muslims and this could not be passed over. The Prophet collected his exhausted force and told them that there was no rest for them yet. Before the sun went down, they must fall upon the Banū Quraizah in their fortifications. Then he sent 'Alī to the Banū Quraizah to ask them why they had gone back

on their solemn word. The Banū Quraiḏah showed no regret and no inclination to ask for forgiveness. Instead, they insulted ‘Alī and the other Muslim delegates and started hurling vile abuse at the Prophet and the women of his family. They said they did not care for Muḥammad and had never had any kind of pact with him. When ‘Alī returned to report the reply of the Jews, he found the Prophet and the Companions advancing towards the Jewish fortifications. The Jews had been abusing the Prophet, his wives and daughters. Fearing lest this should pain the Prophet, ‘Alī suggested there was no need for the Prophet to take part as the Muslims themselves could deal with the Jews. The Prophet understood ‘Alī and said, "You want me not to hear their abuse, ‘Alī?"

"Exactly," said ‘Alī.

"But why?" said the Prophet. "Moses was of their kith and kin. Yet they inflicted more suffering on him than they have on me." The Prophet continued to advance. The Jews put up their defences and started fighting. Their women also joined them. Some Muslims were sitting at the foot of a wall. A Jewish woman, seeing this, dropped a stone on them, killing one named Khallād. The siege went on for some days. At the end of this period, the Jews felt they would not be able to hold out for long. Then their chiefs sent word to the Prophet requesting him to send Abū Lubābah, an Anṣārī chief of the Aus, a tribe friendly to the Jews. They wanted to consult him about a possible settlement. The Prophet sent Abū Lubābah to the Jews, who asked him if they should lay down their arms and accept the award of the Prophet. Abū Lubābah said they should. But at the same time he passed a finger over his neck, making the sign of death. The Prophet had said nothing on this subject to anybody. But Abū Lubābah, fearing that the crime of the Jews merited nothing but death, unwittingly made this sign, which proved fateful for the Jews. The latter declined Abū Lubābah's advice and refused to accept the Prophet's award. Had they accepted it, the utmost punishment they would have had was expulsion from Medina. But as ill-luck would have it, they refused to accept the Prophet's award. Instead of the Prophet's, they said, they would accept the award of Sa'd bin Mu'ādh, chief of their allies, the Aus. They would agree to any punishment proposed by him. A dispute also arose among the Jews. Some of them began to say that their people had really gone back on their agreement with the Muslims. The behaviour of the Muslims, on the other hand, showed that they were true and honest and that their religion also was true. Those who thought in this way joined Islam. ‘Amr bin Ma'dī, one of the Jewish chiefs, reproved his people and said, "You have committed a breach of faith and gone back on your plighted word. The only course now open to you is either to join Islam or give *jizyah*."



They said, "We will neither join Islam nor give *jizyah*, for dying is better than giving *jizyah*." 'Amr replied that in that case he stood absolved, and saying this left the fort. He was sighted by Muḥammad bin Maslamah, commander of a Muslim column, who asked him who he was. On learning of his identity he told him to depart in peace and himself prayed loudly:

"God, give me ever the power to screen the mistakes of the decent."

What he meant was that this Jew had shown remorse and regret over the conduct of his people. It was the moral duty of Muslims, therefore, to forgive men like him. In letting him go he had done a good thing, and he prayed that God should give him the chance to do such good deeds again and again. When the Prophet got to know of what Muḥammad bin Maslamah had done, he did not reprove him for letting go this Jewish leader. Rather, he approved of what had been done.

The disposition to make peace and to accept the award of the Prophet had been expressed only by individual Jews. As a people, they remained adamant and refused to accept the award of the Prophet and asked, instead, for the award of Sa'd bin Mu'adh (*Bukhārī*, *Ṭabarī* and *Khamīs*). The Prophet accepted their demand and sent word to Sa'd, who was lying wounded, to come and give his award on the Jewish breach of faith. As soon as the Prophet's decision was announced, the Ausites who had been allies of the Banū Quraizah for a long time ran to Sa'd and began to press him to give his award in favour of the Banū Quraizah. The Khazraj, they said, had always tried to save Jews allied to them. It was up to Sa'd to save the Jews allied to his tribe. Sa'd went mounted to the Banū Quraizah. Men of his tribe ran with him on both sides, pressing him not to punish the Banū Quraizah. All that Sa'd said in reply was that the person who had to make an award held a trust. He had to discharge the trust with integrity. "I will therefore give my award, taking everything into consideration, and without fear or favour," he said. When Sa'd reached the Jewish fortress, he saw the Banū Quraizah lined up against the wall of the fort, waiting for him. On the other side were Muslims. When Sa'd got near them he asked, "Will you accept my award?" They said, "Yes."

### **Sa'd's Award in Harmony with the Bible**

Turning to the Banū Quraizah he asked the same question, and they also agreed. Then shyly he pointed to the side where the Prophet was sitting and asked if the people on that side also agreed to abide by his award. On hearing this, the Prophet replied, "Yes" (*Ṭabarī* and *Hishām*). Then Sa'd gave his award in accordance with the following commandment of the Bible. Says the Bible:

When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amoiites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God (Deut. 20:10-18).

According to the teaching of the Bible, if the Jews had won and the Prophet had lost, all Muslims—men, women and children—would have been put to death. We know from history that this was the very intention of the Jews. The least the Jews would have done was to put to death the men, to enslave the women and children and make away with the belongings of the Muslims, this being the treatment laid down in Deuteronomy for enemy nations living in distant parts of the world. Sa'd was friendly to the Banū Quraizah. His tribe was in alliance with theirs. When he saw that the Jews had refused to accept the award of the Prophet and refused thus to have the lighter punishment prescribed for such an offence in Islam, he decided to award to the Jews the punishment which Moses had laid down. The responsibility for this award does not rest with the Prophet or the Muslims, but with Moses and his teaching and with the Jews who had treated the Muslims so cruelly. They were offered what would have been a compassionate award. But, instead of accepting this, they insisted on an award by Sa'd. Sa'd decided to punish the Jews in accordance with the Law of Moses. Yet Christians to this day continue to defame the Prophet of Islam and say that he was cruel to the Jews. If the Prophet was cruel to the Jews, why was he not cruel to other people or on other occasions? There were many occasions on which the Prophet's enemies threw themselves at his mercy, and never did they ask in vain for his forgiveness. On this occasion the enemy insisted on a person other than the Prophet making the award. This nominee of the Jews, acting as umpire between them and the Muslims, asked the Prophet and the Jews in public

whether they would accept his award. It was after the parties had agreed, that he proceeded to announce it. And what was his award? It was nothing but the application of the Law of Moses to the offence of the Jews. Why then should they not have accepted it? Did they not count themselves among the followers of Moses? If any cruelty was perpetrated, it was by the Jews on the Jews. The Jews refused to accept the Prophet's award and invited instead the application of their own religious law to their offence. If any cruelty was perpetrated it was by Moses, who laid down this penalty for a beleaguered enemy and laid this down in his book under the command of God. Christian writers should not pour out the vials of their wrath on the Prophet of Islam. They should condemn Moses who prescribed this cruel penalty or the God of Moses, Who commanded him to do so.

The Battle of the Ditch over, the Prophet declared that from that day onwards pagans would not attack Muslims; instead, Muslims would now attack pagans. The tide was going to turn. Muslims were going to take the offensive against tribes and parties which had so far been gratuitously attacking and harassing them. What the Prophet said was no empty threat. In the Battle of the Ditch the Arab confederates had not suffered any considerable losses. They had lost only a few men. In less than a year's time they could have come and attacked Medina again and with even better preparations. Instead of any army of twenty thousand they could have raised for a new attack an army of forty, or even fifty, thousand. An army numbering a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand was not beyond their capacity. But now for twenty-one years, the enemies of Islam had done their utmost to extirpate Islam and Muslims. Continued failure of their plans had shaken their confidence. They had begun to fear that what the Prophet taught was true, and that their national idols and gods were false, that the Creator was the One Invisible God taught by the Prophet. The fear that the Prophet was right and they wrong had begun to creep upon them. There was no outward sign of this fear, however. Physically, the disbelievers went about as they had always done. They went to their idols and prayed to them as national custom required. But their spirit was broken. Outwardly they lived the lives of pagans and disbelievers; inwardly their hearts seemed to echo the Muslim slogan, 'There is no God but Allah.'

After the Battle of the Ditch the Prophet, as we have observed already, declared that henceforward disbelievers would not attack Muslims but that, instead, Muslims would attack disbelievers. Muslim endurance had reached its limit. The tide was going to turn (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Maghāzī*).

### **Did the Prophet Seek to Continue Warfare?**

In the battles which had so far been fought, Muslims had either remained in Medina or gone some distance out of it to fight the aggression of disbelievers. Muslims did not initiate these encounters, and showed no disposition to continue them after they had started. Normally hostilities once begun, can be ended in only two ways—an agreed peace or the submission of one side to the other. In the encounters between Muslims and disbelievers so far there had been no hint of a peace nor had either side offered to submit. True, there had been pauses in the fighting, but nobody could say that war between Muslims and disbelievers had ended. According to ordinary canons, Muslims could have attacked the enemy tribes and compelled them to surrender. But Muslims did not do this. When the enemy stopped fighting, Muslims stopped also. They stopped because they believed there might be a talk of peace. But when it became evident that there was no talk of peace by the disbelievers, nor was there any disposition on their part to surrender, the Prophet thought that the time had come to end the war either by a peace or by the surrender of one side to the other. War had to be ended if there was to be peace. After the Battle of the Ditch, therefore, the Prophet seemed determined to secure one of two things; peace or surrender. That Muslims should surrender to disbelievers was out of question. The victory of Islam over its persecutors had been promised by God. Declarations to this effect had been made by the Prophet during his stay at Mecca. Could Muslims then have sued for peace? A movement for peace can be initiated either by the stronger or by the weaker side. When the weaker side sues for peace it has to surrender, temporarily or permanently, a part of its territory or part of its revenues; or it has to accept other conditions imposed upon it by the enemy. When the stronger side proposes peace it is understood that it does not aim at the total destruction of the weaker side but is willing to let it retain complete or partial independence in return for certain conditions. In the battles which had so far been fought between Muslims and disbelievers the latter had suffered defeat after defeat. Yet their power had not been broken. They had only failed in their attempts to destroy Muslims. Failure to destroy another does not mean defeat. It only means that aggression has not yet succeeded; attacks which have failed may be repeated. The Meccans, therefore, had not been beaten; only their aggression against Muslims had failed. Militarily speaking, Muslims were decidedly the weaker side. True, their defence was still maintained, but they constituted a miserable minority and a minority which, though it had been able to resist the aggression of the majority, had been unable to take the offensive. Muslims, therefore, had not yet established their independence. If they had sued for peace, it would have meant that their

defence had broken, and that they were now ready to accept the terms of the disbelievers. An offer of peace by them would have been disastrous for Islam. It would have meant self-annihilation. It would have brought new life to an enemy demoralized by repeated defeats. A growing sense of defeat would have given place to renewed hope and ambition. Disbelievers would have thought that though Muslims had saved Medina, they were still pessimistic about their ultimate victory over disbelievers. A suggestion of peace, therefore, could not have proceeded from the Muslim side. It could have proceeded from the Meccan side, or from a third side, if a third side could have been found. No third side could, however, be found. In the conflict which had arisen Medina was set against all Arabia. It was the disbelievers, therefore, who could have sued the Muslims for peace, and there was no sign of this. Thus warfare between Muslims and Arabs might have gone on forever. The Muslims could not, and the Arabs would not, sue for peace. Civil strife in Arabia, therefore, seemed to have no end, at least not for another hundred years.

There was only one way open to Muslims if they wanted to put an end to this strife. They were not prepared to surrender their conscience to the Arabs, to renounce, that is to say, their right to profess, practise and preach what they liked; and there was no movement for peace from the side of disbelievers. Muslims had been able to repel repeated aggression. It was for them, therefore, to force the Arabs either to surrender or to accept peace. The Prophet decided to do so.

Was it war which the Prophet sought? No, it was not war but peace that he wanted to bring about. If he had done nothing at this time, Arabia would have remained in the grip of civil warfare. The step which he took was the only way to peace. There have been some long wars in history. Some have lasted for a hundred, some for thirty years or so. Long wars have always resulted from lack of decisive action by either side. Decisive action, as we have said, can take only one of two forms—complete surrender or a negotiated peace.

Could the Prophet have remained passive? Could he have withdrawn himself and his small force of Muslims behind the walls of Medina and left everything else to take care of itself? This was impossible. The disbelievers had started the aggression. Passivity would not have meant the end of war but, rather, its continuation. It would have meant that the disbelievers could attack Medina whenever they liked. They could stop when they liked and attack when they liked. A pause in warfare did not mean the end of war. It meant only a strategic move.

## **Teachings of Judaism and Christianity about War**

But the question now arises—Can it ever be right to fight for a faith? Let us, therefore, turn to this question.

The teaching of religion on the subject of war takes different forms. The teaching of the Old Testament, we have cited above. Moses is commanded to enter the land of Canaan by force, to defeat its population and to settle his own people in it (Deut. 20:10-18). In spite of this teaching in the Book of Moses, and in spite of its reinforcement by practical example of the Prophets Joshua, David and others, Jews and Christians continue to hold their Prophets in reverence and to regard their books as the Books of God.

At the end of the Mosaic tradition, we had Jesus who taught;

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also (*Matthew* 5:39).

Christians have often cited this teaching of Jesus and argued that Jesus preached against war. But in the New Testament, we have passages which purport to teach quite the opposite. One passage, for instance, says:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword (*Matthew* 10:34).

And another passage says:

Then said he unto them. But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one (*Luke* 22:36).

Of the three verses the last two contradict the first. If Jesus came for war, why did he teach about turning the other cheek? It seems we have either to admit a contradiction in the New Testament, or we have to explain one of the contradictory teachings in a suitable manner. We are not concerned here with the question whether turning the other cheek can ever be practicable. We are concerned only to point out that, throughout their long history, no Christian people have ever hesitated to make war. When Christians first attained to power in Rome, they took part in wars both defensive and aggressive. They are dominant powers in the world today, and they continue to take part in wars both defensive and aggressive. Only now the side which wins is canonized by the rest of the Christian world. Their victory is said to be the victory of Christian civilization. Christian civilization has come to mean whatever tends to be dominant and successful. When two Christian powers go to war, each claims to be the protector of Christian ideals. The power which wins is canonized as the true Christian power. It is true, however, that from the time of Jesus to our time, Christendom has been involved—and indications are that it will continue to remain involved—in war. The practical verdict of the

Christian peoples, therefore, is that war is the real teaching of the New Testament, and that turning the other cheek was either an opportunist teaching dictated by the helplessness of early Christians, or it is meant to apply only to individuals, not to States and peoples.

Secondly, even if we assume that Jesus taught peace and not war, it does not follow that those who do not act upon this teaching are not holy and honoured. For Christendom has ever revered exponents of war such as Moses, Joshua and David. Not only this, the Church itself has canonized national heroes who suffered in wars. They were made saints by the Popes.

### **The Quran on War and Peace**

The teaching of Islam is different from both these teachings. It strikes a mean between the two. Islam does not teach aggression as did Moses. Nor does it, like present-day (and presumably corrupt) Christianity, preach a contradiction. It does not ask us to turn the other cheek and at the same time to sell our clothes to buy a sword. The teaching of Islam fits into the natural instincts of man, and promotes peace in the only possible way.

Islam forbids aggression, but it urges us to fight if failure to fight jeopardizes peace and promotes war. If failure to fight means the extirpation of free belief and of the search of truth, it is our duty to fight. This is the teaching on which peace can ultimately be built, and this is the teaching on which the Prophet based his own policies and his practice. The Prophet suffered continuously and consistently at Mecca but did not fight the aggression of which he was an innocent victim. When he escaped to Medina, the enemy was out to extirpate Islam; it was, therefore, necessary to fight the enemy in defence of truth and freedom of belief.

We quote below the passages in the Quran which bear on the subject of war.

(1) In 22:40–42 we have:

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged—and Allah indeed has power to help them—Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, "Our Lord is Allah"—And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty—Those who, if We establish them in the earth, will observe Prayer and pay the Zakāh and enjoin good and forbid evil. And with Allah rests the final issue of all affairs.

The verse purports to say that permission to fight is given to the victims of aggression. God is well able to help the victims—those who have been driven out of their homes because of their beliefs. The permission is wise because, if God were not to repel the cruel with the help of the righteous, there would be no freedom of faith and worship in the world. God must help those who help to establish freedom and worship. It follows that fighting is permitted when a people have suffered long from wanton aggression—when the aggressor has had no cause for aggression and he seeks to interfere with the religion of his victim. The duty of the victim, if and when he attains to power, is to establish religious freedom and to protect all religions and all religious places. His power is to be used not for his own glorification, but for the care of the poor, the progress of the country and the general promotion of peace. This teaching is as unexceptionable as it is clear and precise. It proclaims the fact that early Muslims took to war because they were constrained to do so. Aggressive wars were forbidden by Islam. Muslims are promised political power, but are warned that this power must be used not for self-aggrandizement, but for the amelioration of the poor and the promotion of peace and progress.

(2) In 2:191–194 we have:

And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not transgressors. And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not in, and near, the Sacred Mosque until they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.

Fighting is to be for the sake of God, not for our own sake or out of anger or aggrandizement, and even fighting is to be free from excesses, for excesses are displeasing to God. Fighting is between parties of combatants. Assaults on individuals are forbidden. Aggression against a religion is to be met by active resistance, for such aggression is worse than bloodshed. Muslims are not to fight near the Sacred Mosque, unless an attack is first made by the enemy. Fighting near the Sacred Mosque interferes with the public right of pilgrimage. But if the enemy attacks, Muslims are free to reply, this being the just reward of aggression. But if the enemy desists, Muslims must desist also, and forgive and forget the past. Fighting is to continue so long as religious persecution lasts and religious freedom is not established. Religion is for God. The use of force or pressure in religion is wrong. If the Kafirs desist from it



and make religion free, Muslims are to desist from fighting the Kafirs. Arms are to be taken up against those who commit excesses. When excesses cease, fighting must cease also.

Categorically, we may say, the verses teach the following rules:

(i) War is to be resorted to only for the sake of God and not for the sake of any selfish motives, not for aggrandizement or for the advancement of any other interests.

(ii) We can go to war only against one who attacks us first.

(iii) We can fight only those who fight against us. We cannot fight against those who take no part in warfare.

(iv) Even after the enemy has initiated the attack, it is our duty to keep warfare within limits. To extend the war, either territorially or in respect of weapons used, is wrong.

(v) We are to fight only a regular army charged by the enemy to fight on his side. We are not to fight others on the enemy side.

(vi) In warfare, immunity is to be afforded to all religious rites and observances. If the enemy spares the places where religious ceremonies are held, then Muslims also must desist from fighting in such places.

(vii) If the enemy uses a place of worship as a base for attack, then Muslims may return the attack. No blame will attach to them if they do so. No fighting is allowed even in the neighbourhood of religious places. To attack religious places and to destroy them or to do any kind of harm to them is absolutely forbidden. A religious place used as a base of operations may invite a counter-attack. The responsibility for any harm done to the place will then rest with the enemy, not with Muslims.

(viii) If the enemy realizes the danger and the mistake of using a religious place as a base, and changes the battle-front, then Muslims must conform to the change. The fact that the enemy started the attack from a religious place is not to be used as an excuse for attacking that place. Out of reverence, Muslims must change their battlefront as soon as the enemy does so.

(ix) Fighting is to continue only so long as interference with religion and religious freedom lasts. When religion becomes free and interference with it is no longer permitted and the enemy declares and begins to act accordingly, then there is to be no war, even if it is the enemy who starts it.

(3) In 8:39–41 we have:

Say to those who disbelieve, if they desist, that which is past will be forgiven them; and if they return thereto, then verily the example of the former people has already gone before them.

And fight them until there is no persecution and religion is wholly for Allah. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Watchful of what they do.

And if they turn their backs, then know that Allah is your Protector.  
What an excellent Protector and what an excellent Helper.

That is to say, wars have been forced upon Muslims. But if the enemy desists, it is the duty of Muslims to desist also, and forgive the past. But if the enemy does not desist and attacks Muslims again and again, then he should remember the fate of the enemies of earlier Prophets. Muslims are to fight, while religious persecution lasts, and so long as religion is not for God and interference in religious matters is not abandoned. When the aggressor desists, Muslims are to desist also. They are not to continue the war because the enemy believes in a false religion. The value of beliefs and actions is well known to God and He will reward them as He pleases. Muslims have no right to meddle with another people's religion even if that religion seems to them to be false. If after an offer of peace the enemy continues to make war, then Muslims may be sure of victory even though their numbers are small. For God will help them and who can help better than God?

These verses were revealed in connection with the Battle of Badr. This battle was the first regular fight between Muslims and disbelievers. In it Muslims were the victims of unprovoked aggression. The enemy had chosen to disturb the peace of Medina and of the territory around. In spite of this, victory went to the Muslims and important leaders of the enemy were killed. To retaliate against such unprovoked aggression seems natural, just and necessary. Yet Muslims are taught to stop fighting as soon as the enemy ceases it. All that the enemy is required to concede is freedom of belief and worship.

(4) In 8:62-63 we have:

And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. And if they intend to deceive thee, then surely Allah is sufficient for thee. He it is Who has strengthened thee with His help and with the believers.

That is to say, if in the course of a battle the disbelievers at any time incline towards peace, Muslims are to accept the offer at once and to make peace. Muslims are to do so even at the risk of being deceived. They are to put their trust in God. Cheating will not avail against Muslims, who rely on the help of God. Their victories are due not to themselves but to God. In the darkest and most difficult times, God has stood by the Prophet and his followers. So will He stand by them against cheats. An offer of peace is to be accepted. It is not to be rejected on the plea that it may only be a ruse with which the enemy seeks to gain time for a fresh attack.

The stress on peace in the verses is not without significance. It anticipates

the peace which the Prophet signed at Ḥudaibiyyah. The Prophet is warned that a time will come when the enemy will sue for peace. The offer is not to be turned down on the ground that the enemy was the aggressor and had committed excesses, or that he cannot be trusted. The straight path inculcated by Islam requires a Muslim to accept an offer of peace. Both piety and policy make the acceptance desirable.

(5) In 4:95 we have:

O ye who believe! when you go forth in the cause of Allah, make proper investigation and say not to anyone who greets you with the greeting of peace, "Thou art not a believer." You seek the goods of this life, but with Allah are good things in plenty. Such were you before this, but Allah conferred His favour on you; so do make proper investigation. Surely, Allah is well aware of what you do.

That is to say, when Muslims go out for war, they are to make sure that the unreasonableness of war has been explained to the enemy and that he still wants war. Even so, if a proposal of peace is received from an individual or a group, Muslims are not to turn it down on the plea that it is not honest. If Muslims turn down proposals of peace, they will not be fighting for God, but for self-aggrandizement and worldly gain. Just as religion comes from God, worldly gain and glory also come from Him. Killing is not to be the aim. One whom we wish to kill today may be guided tomorrow. Could Muslims have become Muslims if they had not been spared? Muslims are to abstain from killing because lives spared may turn out to be lives guided. God is well aware of what men do and to what ends and with what motives they do it.

The verse teaches that even after war has begun, it is the duty of Muslims to satisfy themselves that the enemy is bent upon aggression. It often happens that no aggression is intended but that out of excitement and fear the enemy has started preparations for war. Unless Muslims are satisfied that an aggressive attack has been planned by the enemy, they are not to go to war. If it turns out, or if the enemy claims, that his preparations are for self-defence, Muslims are to accept the claim and desist from war. They are not to argue that the enemy preparations point to nothing but aggression; maybe he intended aggression, but his intention has changed. Are not intentions and motives continually changing? Did not enemies of Islam become friends?

(6) On the inviolability of treaties the Quran says clearly:

Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you have entered into a treaty and who have not subsequently failed you in anything nor aided anyone against you. So fulfil to these the treaty you have made with them till their term. Surely, Allah loves those who are righteous (9:4).

Pagans, who enter into a pact with Muslims, keep the pact and do not help the enemy against Muslims, are to have reciprocal treatment from Muslims. Piety requires that Muslims should fulfil their part of a pact in the letter as well as the spirit.

(7) Of an enemy at war with Muslims who wishes to study the Message of Islam, the Quran orders:

And if anyone of the idolaters ask protection of thee, grant him protection, so that he may hear the word of Allah: then convey him to his place of security. That is because they are a people who have no knowledge (9:6).

That is to say, if any of those at war with Muslims seek refuge with Muslims in order to study Islam and ponder over its Message, they are to have refuge with Muslims for such time as may be reasonably necessary for such a purpose.

(8) Of prisoners of war, the Quran teaches:

It does not behove a Prophet that he should have captives until he engages in a regular fighting in the land. You desire the goods of the world, while Allah desires for you the Hereafter. And Allah is Mighty, Wise (8:68).

That is to say, it does not become a Prophet to make prisoners of his enemy save as a result of regular war involving much bloodshed. The system of making prisoners of enemy tribes without war and bloodshed practised until—and even after—the advent of Islam, is here made unlawful. Prisoners can be taken only from combatants and after a battle.

(9) Rules for the release of prisoners are also laid down. Thus we have:

Then afterwards either release them as a favour or by taking ransom—until the war lays down its burdens (47:5).

The best thing, according to Islam, is to let off prisoners without asking for ransom. As this is not always possible, release by ransom is also provided for.

(10) There is provision for prisoners of war who are unable themselves to pay, and who have none who can or will pay, for their release. Often, relations are able to pay, but do not, because they prefer to let their relations remain prisoners—possibly with the intention of misappropriating their property in their absence. This provision is contained in the Quran:

And such as desire a deed of manumission from among those whom your right hands possess, write it for them, if you know any good in them; and give them out of the wealth of Allah which He has bestowed upon you (24:34).

That is, those who do not deserve to be released without ransom but who have no one to pay ransom for them—if they still ask for their freedom—can obtain it by signing an undertaking that, if allowed to work and earn, they will pay their ransom. They are to be allowed to do so, however, only if their competence to work and earn is reasonably certain. If their competence is proved, they should even have financial help from Muslims in their effort to work and earn. Individual Muslims who can afford to do so should pay; or, public subscription should be raised to put these unfortunates on their feet.

The passages from the Quran which we have quoted above contain the teaching of Islam on the subject of war and peace. They tell us in what circumstances, according to Islam, is it right to go to war and what limits have to be observed by Muslims when they make war.

### **The Prophet's Precepts about War**

Muslim teaching, however, does not consist only of precepts laid down in the Quran. It also includes the precepts and example of the Prophet. What he did or what he taught in concrete situations is also an essential part of the Islamic teaching. We append here some sayings of the Prophet on the subject of war and peace.

- (i) Muslims are forbidden altogether to mutilate the dead (*Muslim*).
- (ii) Muslims are forbidden to resort to cheating (*Muslim*).
- (iii) Children are not to be killed, nor women (*Muslim*).
- (iv) Priests and religious functionaries and religious leaders are not to be interfered with (*Tahāwī*).
- (v) The old and decrepit and women and children are not to be killed. The possibility of peace should always be kept in view (*Abū Dāwūd*).
- (vi) When Muslims enter enemy territory, they should not strike terror into the general population. They should permit no ill-treatment of common folk (*Muslim*).
- (vii) A Muslim army should not camp in a place where it causes inconvenience to the general public. When it marches it should take care not to block the road nor cause discomfort to other wayfarers.
- (viii) No disfigurement of face is to be permitted (*Bukhārī and Muslim*).
- (ix) The least possible losses should be inflicted upon the enemy (*Abū Dāwūd*).
- (x) When prisoners of war are put under guard, those closely related should be placed together (*Abū Dāwūd*).
- (xi) Prisoners should live in comfort. Muslims should care more for the comfort of their prisoners than for their own (*Tirmidhī*).
- (xii) Emissaries and delegates from other countries should be held in

great respect. Any mistakes or discourtesies they commit should be ignored (*Abū Dāwūd, Kitābul-Jihād*).

(xiii) If a Muslim commits the sin of ill-treating a prisoner of war, atonement is to be made by releasing the prisoner without ransom.

(xiv) When a Muslim takes charge of a prisoner of war, the latter is to be fed and clothed in the same way as the Muslim himself (*Bukhārī*).

The Holy Prophet was so insistent on these rules for a fighting army that he declared that whoever did not observe these rules, would fight not for God but for his own mean self (*Abū Dāwūd*).

Abū Bakr, the First *Khalīfah* of Islam, supplemented these commands of the Prophet by some of his own. One of these commands appended here also constitutes part of the Muslim teaching:

(xv) Public buildings and fruit-bearing trees (and food crops) are not to be damaged (*Mu'aṭṭā*).

From the sayings of the Prophet and the commands of the First *Khalīfah* of Islam it is evident that Islam has instituted steps which have the effect of preventing or stopping a war or reducing its evil. As we have said before, the principles which Islam teaches are not pious precepts only; they have their practical illustration in the example of the Prophet and the early *Khalīfahs* of Islam. As all the world knows, the Prophet not only taught these principles; he practised them and insisted on their observance.

Turning to our own time we must say that no other teaching seems able to solve the problem of war and peace. The teaching of Moses is far from our conceptions of justice and fair-play. Nor is it possible to act upon that teaching today. The teaching of Jesus is impracticable and has ever been so. Never in their history have Christians tried to put this teaching into practice. Only the teaching of Islam is practicable; one which has been both preached and practised by its exponents, and the practice of which can create and maintain peace in the world.

In our time, Mr. Gāndhī apparently taught that even when war is forced on us we should not go to war. We should not fight. But this teaching has not been put into practice at any time in the history of the world. It has never been put in the crucible and tested. It is impossible, therefore, to say what value this teaching may have in terms of war and peace. Mr. Gāndhī lived long enough to see the Indian Congress attain to political independence. Yet the Congress government has not disbanded either the army or the other armed forces of India. It is only making plans for their Indianisation. It also has plans for the reinstatement of those Indian officers who constituted themselves into the Indian National Army (and who were dismissed by the British authorities) during the Japanese attack on Burma and India in the last stages of the recent World War. Mr. Gāndhī has himself, on many occasions, raised his voice in

extenuation of crimes of violence, and urged the release of those who committed such crimes. This shows at least that Mr. Gāndhī's teaching cannot be put into practice and that Mr. Gāndhī knows it as well as all his followers. No practical example at least has been offered to show the world how non-violence can be applied when armed disputes arise between nation and nation and State and State, or how non-violence can prevent or stop a war. To preach a method of stopping wars, but never to be able to afford a practical illustration of that method indicates that the method is impracticable. It would, therefore, seem that human experience and human wisdom point to only one method of preventing or stopping war; and that method was taught and practised by the Prophet of Islam.

### **Sporadic Attacks by Disbelievers**

The Arab confederates returned from the Battle of the Ditch defeated and depressed, but far from realizing that their power to harass the Muslims was over. Though defeated, they knew they were still a dominant majority. They could easily maltreat individual Muslims, beat and even kill them. By assaults on individuals they hoped to wipe away their feeling of defeat. Not long after the battle, therefore, they began to attack Muslims around Medina. Some men of the Fazārah tribe mounted on camels attacked Muslims near Medina. They made away with the camels found in that part, took a woman as prisoner and escaped with the loot. The woman made good her escape, but the party of Fazārah succeeded in taking away a number of animals. A month later, a party of the Ghaṭafān tribe attacked from the north in an attempt to dispossess Muslims of their herds of camels. The Prophet sent Muḥammad bin Maslamah with ten mounted Companions for a reconnaissance, and for the protection of the Muslim herds. But the enemy waylaid the Muslim party and murderously attacking them, left them all for dead. Muḥammad bin Maslamah, however, was only lying unconscious. Recovering consciousness he pulled himself together, returned to Medina and made a report. A few days later, an envoy of the Prophet on his way to the Roman capital was attacked and robbed by men of the Jurham tribe. A month later, the Banū Fazārah attacked a Muslim caravan and made away with much loot. It is possible that this attack was not prompted by religious antagonism. The Banū Fazārah were a tribe of marauders given to looting and killing. The Jews of Khaibar, the main factor in the Battle of the Ditch, were also determined to avenge the crushing defeat which they suffered in that battle. They went about inciting tribal settlements and officers of State on the Roman frontier. Arab leaders, therefore, unable to make a straightforward attack on Medina, were intriguing with the Jews to make life impossible for Muslims. The Prophet, however,

had yet to make up his mind for a decisive fight. Arab leaders might make an offer of peace, he thought, and civil strife might end.

### **The Prophet Leaves for Mecca with 1500 Companions**

During this time the Prophet saw a vision which is mentioned thus in the Quran:

You will certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if God wills, in security, some having their heads shaven, and others having their hair cut short; and you will not fear. But He knew what you knew not. He has in fact ordained for you, besides that, a victory near at hand (48:28).

That is to say, God had decided to let Muslims enter the precincts of the Ka'bah in peace, with heads shaven and hair cut (these being the external signs of pilgrims to the Ka'bah), and without fear. But Muslims did not know exactly how God was to let this happen. Moreover, before Muslims performed their Pilgrimage in peace, they were to have another victory, a precursor of the victory promised in the vision.

In this vision God foretold the ultimate victory of Muslims, their peaceful march into Mecca and the conquest of Mecca without the use of arms. But the Prophet understood it to mean that Muslims had been commanded by God immediately to attempt a circuit of the Ka'bah. The Prophet's error in interpreting the vision was to become the occasion of the victory 'near at hand' promised in the vision. In error, therefore, the Prophet planned a march towards the Ka'bah. He announced his vision and his interpretation of it to Muslims and asked them to prepare. "You will go," he said, "only to perform a circuit of the Ka'bah. There were, therefore, to be no demonstrations against the enemy." Late in February 628, fifteen hundred\* pilgrims, headed by the Prophet, set out on their journey to Mecca. A mounted guard of twenty went some distance ahead to warn the Muslims in case the enemy showed signs of attacking.

The Meccans soon had reports of this caravan. Tradition had established the circuit of the Ka'bah as a universal right. It could not very well be denied to Muslims. They had announced in unambiguous terms that the purpose of their march was to perform the circuit, nothing else. The Prophet had forbidden demonstrations of every kind. There were to be no disputes, no questionings or claims. In spite of this, the Meccans started preparing as for

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\* In this Pilgrimage planned a year after the Battle of the Ditch, only one thousand five hundred men accompanied the Prophet. The number of Muslim combatants in the Battle of the Ditch could have been less but not more than this number. Historians who put the number of the Muslim combatants in the Battle of the Ditch at three thousand, therefore, are wrong. The number can quite reasonably be put at one thousand two hundred.



an armed conflict. They put up defences on all sides, called the surrounding tribes to their aid and seemed determined to fight. When the Prophet reached near Mecca, he was informed that the Quraish were ready to fight. They were clad in tiger skins, had their wives and children with them and had sworn solemnly not to let the Muslims pass. The tiger skins were a sign of a savage determination to fight. Soon after, a column of Meccans marching in the van of their army confronted the Muslims. Muslims could not now advance except by drawing the sword. The Prophet, however, was determined to do nothing of the kind.

He employed a guide to show the Muslim caravan an alternative route through the desert. Led by this guide, the Prophet and his Companions reached Ḥudaibiyyah, a spot very near Mecca.

The Prophet's dromedary stopped and refused to go any farther.

"The animal seems tired, O Prophet of God. Better change your mount," said a Companion.

"No, no," said the Prophet, "the animal is not tired. It seems rather that God wants us to stop here and to go no further. I propose, therefore, to camp here and to ask the Meccans if they would let us perform the Pilgrimage. I, for one, will accept any conditions they may choose to impose" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2, p. 13).

The Meccan army at this time was not in Mecca. It had gone out some distance to meet the Muslims on the main road to Medina. If the Prophet wanted, he could have led his fifteen hundred men into Mecca and taken the town without resistance. But he was determined to attempt only the circuit of the Ka'bah, and that only if the Meccans permitted. He would have resisted and fought the Meccans only if the Meccans had chosen to strike first. Therefore, he abandoned the main road and camped at Ḥudaibiyyah. Soon the news reached the Meccan commander, who ordered his men to withdraw and post themselves near Mecca. Then the Meccans sent a chief, Budail by name, to parley with the Prophet. The Prophet explained to Budail that he and the Muslims wanted only to perform the circuit of the Ka'bah; but if the Meccans wished to fight, the Muslims were ready. Then 'Urwah, son-in-law of Abū Sufyān, the Meccan commander, came to the Prophet. He behaved most discourteously. He called the Muslims tramps and dregs of society and said the Meccans would not let them enter Mecca. More and more Meccans came to have talks and the last thing they said was that at least that year they would not let Muslims perform even the circuit of the Ka'bah. The Meccans would be humiliated if they permitted the circuit this year. The following year, they might do so.

Some tribes allied with the Meccans urged upon the Meccan leaders to let the Muslims perform the circuit. After all, it was only the right of circuit they

wanted. Why should they be stopped even from this? But the Meccans remained adamant. Thereupon the tribal leaders said, the Meccans did not want peace and threatened to disassociate themselves from them. Out of fear, the Meccans were persuaded to try to reach a settlement with the Muslims. As soon as the Prophet got to know of this, he sent ‘Uthmān (later the Third Khalīfah of Islam) to the Meccans. ‘Uthmān had many relatives in Mecca. They came out and surrounded him, and offered to let him perform the circuit, but declared that they would not let the Prophet do so until the following year. "But," said ‘Uthmān, "I will not perform the circuit unless it is in the company of my Master." ‘Uthmān’s talks with the chiefs of Mecca became prolonged. A rumour was mischievously spread that he had been murdered. It reached the ears of the Prophet. Upon this the Prophet assembled the Companions and said, "The life of an envoy is held sacred among all nations. I have heard that the Meccans have murdered ‘Uthmān. If this is true, we have to enter Mecca, whatever the consequences." The Prophet’s earlier intention to enter Mecca peacefully had to be changed, under the changed circumstances. The Prophet went on, "Those who promise solemnly that if they have to go further, they will not turn back save as victors, should come forward and take the oath on my hand." The Prophet had hardly finished speaking, when all the fifteen hundred Companions stood up and jumped over one another to hold the Prophet’s hand and take the oath. This oath possesses a special importance in the history of early Islam. It is called the "Pledge of the Tree". When the oath was taken, the Prophet was sitting under a tree. Every one of those who took the oath remained proud of it to the end of his days. Of the fifteen hundred present on the occasion, not one held back. They all promised that if the Muslim envoy had been murdered, they would not go back. Either they would take Mecca before dusk, or they would all die fighting. The taking of the oath was not over when ‘Uthmān returned. He reported that the Meccans did not agree to let the Muslims perform the circuit until the following year. They had appointed their delegates to sign a settlement with the Muslims. Soon after, Suhail, a chief of Mecca, came to the Prophet. A settlement was reached and recorded.

### **Treaty of Ḥudaibiyyah**

It ran as follows:

In the name of Allah. These are the conditions of peace between Muḥammad, son of ‘Abdullāh, and Suhail ibn ‘Amr, the envoy of Mecca. There will be no fighting for ten years. Anyone who wishes to join Muḥammad and to enter into any agreement with him, is free to do so. Anyone who wishes to join the Quraish and to enter into an agreement with them is also free to do so. A young man, or one whose

father is alive, if he goes to Muḥammad without permission from his father or guardian, will be returned to his father or guardian. But should anyone go to the Quraish, he will not be returned. This year Muḥammad will go back without entering Mecca. But next year he and his followers can enter Mecca, spend three days and perform the circuit. During these three days the Quraish will withdraw to the surrounding hills. When Muḥammad and his followers enter into Mecca, they will be unarmed except for the sheathed swords which wayfarers in Arabia always have with them (*Bukhārī*).

Two interesting things happened during the signing of this peace. After the terms had been settled the Prophet started to dictate the agreement and said, "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful."

Suhail objected and said, "Allah we know and believe in, but what is this 'the Gracious and the Merciful'? This agreement is between two parties. Therefore the religious beliefs of both parties will have to be respected."

The Prophet agreed at once and said to his scribe, "Only write, 'In the name of Allah'." The Prophet then proceeded to dictate the terms of the agreement. The opening sentence was, 'These are the conditions of peace between the people of Mecca and Muḥammad, the Prophet of God'. Suhail objected again, and said, "If we thought you a Prophet of God, we would not have fought you." The Prophet accepted this objection also. Instead of "Muḥammad, the Prophet of God", he proposed "Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh". As the Prophet was agreeing to everything the Meccans proposed, the Companions felt agitated over the humiliation. Their blood began to boil, and 'Umar, the most excited of them all, went to the Prophet and asked, "O Prophet of God, are we not in the right?"

"Yes," said the Prophet, "we are in the right." "And were we not told by God that we would perform the circuit of the Ka'bah?" asked 'Umar.

"Yes," said the Prophet.

"Then why this agreement and why these humiliating terms?"

"True," said the Prophet, "God did foretell that we would perform the circuit in peace but He did not say when. I did judge as though it was going to be this year. But I could be wrong. Must it be this year?"

'Umar was silenced.

Then other Companions raised their objections. Some of them asked why they had agreed to restore to his father or guardian a young man who should turn Muslim, without obtaining the same condition for a Muslim who should turn over or happen to go to the Meccans. The Prophet explained there was no harm in this. "Everybody who becomes a Muslim," he said, "does so because he accepts the beliefs and practices inculcated by Islam. He does not become a

Muslim in order to join a party and to adopt its customs. Such a man will propagate the Message of Islam wherever he goes, and serve as an instrument for the spread of Islam. But a man who gives up Islam is no use to us. If he no longer believes at heart what we believe, he is no longer one of us. It is better he should go elsewhere." This reply of the Prophet satisfied those who had doubted the wisdom of the course adopted by the Prophet. It should satisfy today all those who think that in Islam the punishment of apostasy is death. Had this been so, the Prophet would have insisted on the return and punishment of those who gave up Islam.

When the agreement had been written down and the signatures of the parties affixed, there soon arose an occasion which tested the good faith of the parties. A son of Suhail, the Meccan plenipotentiary, appeared before the Prophet, bound, wounded and exhausted. He fell at the Prophet's feet and said, "O Prophet of God, I am a Muslim at heart, and because of my faith I have to suffer these troubles at the hands of my father. My father was here with you. So I escaped and managed to come to you." The Prophet had not spoken when Suhail intervened and said that the agreement had been signed and he would have to go with him. Abū Jandal—this being the young man's name—stood before the Muslims, a brother of brothers, driven to desperation by the ill-treatment of his father. To have to send him back was an obligation they could not endure. They unsheathed their swords and seemed determined to die or save this brother. Abū Jandal himself entreated the Prophet to let him remain. Would he send him back to the tyrants from whose clutches he had managed to escape? But the Prophet was determined. He said to Abū Jandal, "Prophets do not eat their words. We have signed this agreement now. It is for you to bear with patience and to put your trust in God. He will certainly provide for your freedom and for the freedom of other young persons like you." After the peace had been signed, the Prophet returned to Medina. Soon after, another young convert from Mecca, Abū Baṣīr by name, reached Medina. But in accord with the terms of the agreement, he also was sent back by the Prophet. On the way back, he and his guards had a fight in the course of which he killed one of the guards and thus managed to escape. The Meccans went to the Prophet again and complained. "But," said the Prophet, "we handed over your man to you. He has now escaped out of your hands. It is no longer our duty to find him and hand him over to you again." A few days later, a woman escaped to Medina. Some of her relations went after her and demanded her return. The Prophet explained that the agreement had laid down an exception about men, not about women; so he refused to return this woman.

## The Prophet's Letters to Various Kings

After settling down in Medina on return from Ḥudaibiyyah, the Prophet instituted another plan for the spread of his Message. When he mentioned this to the Companions, some of them who were acquainted with the customs and forms observed in the courts of kings told the Prophet that kings did not entertain letters which did not bear the seals of the senders. Accordingly the Prophet had a seal made on which were engraved the words *Muḥammad Rasūlullāh*.

Out of reverence, *Allah* was put at the top, beneath it *Rasūl* and lastly *Muḥammad*.

In Muḥarram 628, envoys went to different capitals, each with a letter from the Prophet, inviting the rulers to accept Islam. Envoys went to Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, the Kings of Iran, Egypt (the King of Egypt was then a vassal of the Kaiser) and Abyssinia. They went to other kings and rulers also. The letter addressed to the Kaiser was taken by Diḥyah Kalbī who was instructed to call first on the Governor of Buṣra. When Diḥyah saw the Governor, the great Kaiser himself was in Syria on a tour of the Empire. The Governor readily passed Diḥyah on to the Kaiser. When Diḥyah entered the court, he was told that whoever was received in audience by the Kaiser must prostrate himself before him. Diḥyah refused to do this, saying that Muslims did not bow before any human being. Diḥyah, therefore, sat before the Kaiser without making the prescribed obeisances. The Kaiser had the letter read by an interpreter and asked if an Arab caravan was in the town. He said he desired to interrogate an Arab about this Arabian Prophet who had sent him an invitation to accept Islam. It so happened that Abū Sufyān was in the town with a commercial caravan. The court officials took him to the Kaiser. Abū Sufyān was ordered to stand in front of the other Arabs, who were told to correct him if he should tell a lie or make a wrong statement. Then Heraclius proceeded to interrogate Abū Sufyān. The conversation is thus recorded in history:

H: Do you know this man who claims to be a Prophet and who has sent me a letter? Can you say what sort of family he comes from?

A-S: He comes of a noble family and is one of my relations.

H: Have there been Arabs before him who have made claims similar to his?

A-S: No.

H: Did your people ever charge him with lying before he announced his claim?

A-S: No.

H: Has there been a king or a ruler among his forefathers?

A-S: No.

H: How do you judge his general ability and his capacity for judgement?

A-S: We have never found any fault in his ability and his capacity for judgement.

H: What are his followers like? Are they big and powerful persons or are they poor and humble?

A-S: Mostly poor and humble and young.

H: Do their numbers tend to increase or decrease?

A-S: To increase.

H: Do his followers ever go back to their old beliefs?

A-S: No.

H: Has he ever broken a pledge?

A-S: Not so far. But we have recently entered into a new pact with him. Let us see what he does about it.

H: Have you had any fight with him yet?

A-S: Yes.

H: With what result?

A-S: Like buckets on a wheel, victory and defeat alternate between us and him. In the Battle of Badr, for instance, in which I was not present, he was able to overpower our side. In the Battle of Uḥud, in which I commanded our side, we took his side to task. We tore their stomachs, their ears and their noses,

H: But what does he teach?

A-S: That we should worship the One God and not set up equals with Him. He preaches against the idols our forefathers worshipped. He wants us, instead, to worship the Only God, to speak only truth and always to abjure all vicious and corrupt practices. He exhorts us to be good to one another and to keep our covenants and discharge our trusts.

This interesting conversation came to an end and then the Kaiser said:

I first asked you about his family and you said he belonged to a noble family. In truth, Prophets always come of noble families. I then asked you if anyone before him had made a similar claim and you said, No. I asked you this question because I thought that if in the recent past someone had made such a claim, then one could say that this Prophet was imitating that claim. I then asked you whether he had ever been charged with lying before his claim had been announced and you said, No. I inferred from this that a person who does not lie about men will not lie about God. I next asked you if there had been a king among his forefathers and you said, No. From this I understood that his claim could not be a subtle plan for the recovery of the kingdom. I then

asked you whether the entrants into his fold were mostly big, prosperous and powerful individuals or poor and weak. And you said in reply, that they were generally poor and weak, not proud and big, and so are the early followers of a Prophet. I then asked you whether his numbers were increasing or decreasing and you said they were increasing. At this I remembered that the followers of a Prophet go on increasing until the Prophet attains his goal. I then asked you if his followers left him out of disgust or disappointment, and you said, No. At this I remembered that the followers of Prophets are usually steadfast. They may fall away for other reasons, but not out of disgust for the faith. I then asked you if there had been fights between you and him and, if so, with what results. And you said that you and his followers were like buckets on a wheel and the Prophets are like that. In the beginning their followers suffer reverses and meet with misfortunes, but in the end they win. I then asked you about what he teaches and you said he teaches the worship of One God, truth-speaking, virtue and the importance of keeping covenants and discharging trusts. I asked you also whether he ever played false, and you said, No. And this is the way of virtuous men. It seems to me, therefore, that his claim to being a Prophet is true. I was half expecting his appearance in our time, but I did not know he was going to be an Arab. If what you have told me is true, then I think his influence and his dominion will certainly spread over these lands (*Bukhārī*).

The speech unsettled the courtiers who began to blame the King for applauding a teacher of another community. Protests were raised. The court officials then sent away Abū Sufyān and his friends. The text of the letter which the Prophet wrote to the Kaiser is to be found in historical records. It runs as follows:

From Muḥammad, the Servant of God and His Messenger. To the Chief of Rome, Heraclius. Whoever treads the path of divine guidance, on him be peace. After this, O King, I invite you to Islam. Become a Muslim. God will protect you from all afflictions, and reward you twice over. But if you deny and refuse to accept this Message, then the sin not only of your own denial, but of the denial of your subjects, will be on your head. "Say, 'O People of the Book! come to a word equal between us and you that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside Allah.' But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God' " (*Zurqānī*).

The invitation to Islam was an invitation to believe that God is One and that Muḥammad is His Messenger. Where the letter says that if Heraclius becomes a Muslim, he will be rewarded twice over, the reference is to the fact that Islam teaches belief in both Jesus and Muḥammad.

It is said that when the letter was presented to the Emperor, some courtiers suggested it should be torn up and thrown away. The letter, they said, was an insult to the Emperor. It did not describe the Emperor as Emperor but only as Ṣaḥibur-Rūm, i.e., the Chief of Rome. The Emperor, however, said that it was unwise to tear up the letter without reading it. He also said that the address "Chief of Rome" was not wrong. After all, the Master of everything was God. An Emperor was only a chief.

When the Prophet was told how his letter had been received by Heraclius, he seemed satisfied and pleased and said that because of the reception which the Roman Emperor had given to his letter, his Empire would be saved. The descendants of the Emperor would continue long to rule over the Empire. That is in fact what happened. In the wars which took place later, a large part of the Roman Empire, in accordance with another prophecy of the Prophet of Islam, passed out of the possession of Rome; yet for six hundred years after this, the dynasty of Heraclius remained established in Constantinople. The Prophet's letter remained preserved in the State archives for a long time. Ambassadors of the Muslim King, Maṣṣūr Qalāwūn, visited the court of Rome, and were shown the letter deposited in a case. The then Roman Emperor showing the letter said it had been received by a forefather of his from their Prophet and had been carefully preserved.

### **Letter to the King of Iran**

The letter to the King of Iran was sent through ‘Abdullāh bin Ḥudhaifah. The text of this letter was as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. This letter is from Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, to Chosroes, the Chief of Iran. Whoever submits to a perfect guidance, and believes in Allah, and bears witness that Allah is One, and has no equal or partner, and that Muḥammad is His Servant and Messenger, on him be peace. O King, under the command of God, I invite you to Islam. For I have been sent by God as His Messenger to all mankind, so that I may warn all living men and complete my Message for all unbelievers. Accept Islam and protect yourself from all afflictions. If you reject this invitation, then the sin of the denial of all your people will rest on your head (*Zurqānī* and *Khamīs*).

‘Abdullāh bin Ḥudhaifah says that when he reached the court of Chosroes



he applied for admission to the royal presence. He handed over the letter to the Emperor and the Emperor ordered an interpreter to read it and explain its contents. On listening to the contents, the Chosroes was enraged. He took back the letter and tore it to pieces. ‘Abdullāh bin Ḥudhaifah reported the incident to the Prophet. On hearing the report, the Prophet said:

What the Chosroes has done to our letter even that will God do to his Empire (i.e. rend it to pieces).

The fit of temper which the Chosroes showed on this occasion was the result of the pernicious propaganda carried on against Islam by Jews who had migrated from Roman territory to Iran. These Jewish refugees took a leading part in anti-Roman intrigues sponsored in Iran, and had, therefore, become favourites at the Iranian court. The Chosroes was full of rage against the Prophet. The reports about the Prophet which the Jews had taken to Iran, it seemed to him, were confirmed by this letter. He thought the Prophet was an aggressive adventurer with designs on Iran. Soon after, the Chosroes wrote to the Governor of Yemen, saying that one of the Quraish in Arabia had announced himself a Prophet. His claims were becoming excessive. The Governor was asked to send two men charged with the duty of arresting this Quraishite and bringing him to the court of Iran. Bādhān, the Governor of Yemen under the Chosroes, sent an army chief with a mounted companion to the Prophet. He also gave them a letter addressed to the Prophet, in which he said that on receipt of the letter the Prophet should at once accompany the two messengers to the court of Iran. The two planned to go first to Mecca. When somewhere near Ṭā’if, they were told that the Prophet lived in Medina. So they went to Medina. On arrival this army chief told the Prophet that Bādhān, the Governor of Yemen, had been ordered by the Chosroes to arrange for the Prophet’s arrest and despatch to Iran. If the Prophet refused to obey, he and his people were to be destroyed and their country made desolate. Out of compassion for the Prophet, this delegate from Yemen insisted that the Prophet should obey and agree to be led to Iran. Having listened to this, the Prophet suggested that the delegates should see him again the following day. Overnight the Prophet prayed to God Who informed him that the insolence of the Chosroes had cost him his life. "We have set his own son against him, and this son will murder his father on Monday the 10th Jumādul-’Ūlā of this year." According to some reports, the revelation said, "The son has murdered the father this very night." It is possible that that very night was the 10th Jumādul-’Ūlā. In the morning, the Prophet sent for the Yemen delegates and told them of what had been revealed to him overnight. Then he prepared a letter for Bādhān saying that the Chosroes was due to be murdered on a certain day of a certain month. When the Governor of Yemen received the letter he said, "If

this man be a true Prophet, it will be even as he says. If he be not true, then God help him and his country." Soon after, a boat from Iran anchored at the port of Yemen. It brought a letter from the Emperor of Iran to the Governor of Yemen. The letter bore a new seal, from which the Governor concluded that the prophecy of the Arabian Prophet had proved true. A new seal meant a new king. He opened the letter. It said:

From Chosroes Siroes to Bādhān, the Governor of Yemen. I have murdered my father because his rule had become corrupt and unjust. He murdered the nobles and treated his subjects with cruelty. As soon as you receive this letter, collect all officers and ask them to affirm their loyalty to me. As for my father's orders for the arrest of an Arabian Prophet, you should regard those orders as cancelled (*Ṭabarī*, Vol. 3, pp. 1572–1574 and *Hishām* p. 46).

Bādhān was so impressed by these events that he and many of his friends at once declared their faith in Islam and informed the Prophet accordingly.

### **Letter to the Negus**

The letter to the Negus, King of Abyssinia, was carried by ‘Amr bin Umayyah Damrī. It ran as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful, Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, writes to the Negus, King of Abyssinia. O King, peace of God be upon you. I praise before you the One and Only God. None else is worthy of worship. He is the King of kings, the source of all excellences, free from all defects, He provides peace to all His servants and protects His creatures. I bear witness that Jesus, son of Mary was a Messenger of God, who came in fulfilment of promises made to Mary by God. Mary had consecrated her life to God. I invite you to join with me in attaching ourselves to the One and Only God and in obeying Him. I invite you also to follow me and believe in the God Who hath sent me. I am His Messenger. I invite you and your armies to join the Faith of the Almighty God. I discharge my duty hereby. I have delivered to you the Message of God, and made clear to you the meaning of this Message. I have done so in all sincerity and I trust you will value the sincerity which has prompted this message. He who obeys the guidance of God becomes heir to the blessings of God (*Zurqānī*).

When this letter reached the Negus, he showed very great regard and respect for it. He held it up to his eyes, descended from the throne and ordered an ivory box for it. Then he deposited it in the box and said, "While this letter

is safe, my kingdom is safe." What he said proved true. For one thousand years Muslim armies were out on their career of conquest. They went in all directions, and passed by Abyssinia on all sides, but they did not touch this small kingdom of the Negus; and this, out of regard for two memorable acts of the Negus—the protection he afforded the refugees of early Islam and the reverence he showed to the Prophet's letter. The Empire of Rome became dismembered. The Chosroes lost his dominions. The kingdoms of China and India disappeared but this small kingdom of the Negus remained inviolate, because its ruler received and protected the first Muslim refugees and showed respect and reverence for the Prophet's letter.

Muslims returned the magnanimity of the Negus in this way. Compare with this the treatment which a Christian people, in this age of civilization meted out to this Christian kingdom of the Negus. They bombarded from the air the open cities of Abyssinia and destroyed them. The royal family had to take refuge elsewhere and to stay away from their country for several years. The same people have been treated in two different ways by two different peoples. Muslims held Abyssinia sacred and inviolate because of the magnanimity of one of its rulers. A Christian nation attacked and plundered it in the name of civilization. It shows how wholesome and lasting in their effects are the Prophet's teaching and example. Muslim gratitude to a Christian kingdom made the kingdom sacred to Muslims. Christian greed attacked the same kingdom, not caring it was Christian.

### **Letter to the Ruler of Egypt**

The letter to Muqauqis was carried by Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balta'a. The text of this letter was exactly the same as that to the Roman Emperor. The letter to the Roman Emperor said that the sin of the denial of the Roman subjects would be on his head. The letter to the Muqauqis said that the sin of the denial of the Copts would be on the head of the ruler. It ran as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. This letter is from Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Muqauqis, the Chief of the Copts. Peace be upon him who follows the path of rectitude. I invite you to accept the Message of Islam. Believe and you will be saved and your reward will be twofold. If you disbelieved, the sin of the denial of the Copts will also be on your head. Say, "O People of the Book! come to a word equal between us and you that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside Allah. But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God' " (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 275).

When Ḥaṭīb reached Egypt, he did not find the Muqauqīs in the capital. Ḥaṭīb followed him to Alexandria, where he was holding court near the sea. Ḥaṭīb went by boat. The court was strongly guarded. Therefore Ḥaṭīb showed the letter from a distance and began to speak aloud. The Muqauqīs ordered Ḥaṭīb to be brought to him. The Muqauqīs read the letter and said, "If this man be a true Prophet, why does he not pray for the destruction of his enemies?" Ḥaṭīb replied, "You believe in Jesus. He was ill-treated by his people, yet he did not pray for their destruction." The King paid a tribute to Ḥaṭīb and said he was a wise envoy of a wise man. He had answered well the questions put to him. Upon this Ḥaṭīb spoke again. "Before you," he said, "there was a king who was proud, arrogant and cruel. He was the Pharaoh who persecuted Moses. At last he was overtaken by divine punishment. Show no pride therefore. Believe in this Prophet of God. By God, Moses did not foretell about Jesus as clearly as did Jesus foretell about Muḥammad. We invite you to Muḥammad the Prophet, just as you Christians invite the Jews to Jesus. Every Prophet has his followers. The followers must obey their Prophet. Now that a Prophet has appeared in your time it is your duty to believe in him and follow him. And remember our religion does not ask you to deny or disobey Jesus. Our religion requires everyone to believe in Jesus."

Hearing this, Muqauqīs revealed that he had heard of the teaching of this Prophet and he felt that he did not teach anything evil nor forbid anything good. He had also made inquiries and found that he was no sorcerer or soothsayer. He had heard of some of his prophecies which had come true. Then he sent for an ivory box and placed the letter of the Prophet in it, sealed it and handed it over to a servant girl for safe deposit. He also wrote a letter in reply to the Prophet. The text of this letter is recorded in history. It runs as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. From Muqauqīs, King of the Copts, to Muḥammad, son of ‘Abdullāh. Peace be on you. After this, I say that I have read your letter and pondered over its contents and over the beliefs to which you invite me. I am aware that the Hebrew Prophets have foretold the advent of a Prophet in our time. But I thought he was going to appear in Syria. I have received your envoy, and made a present of one thousand *dinars* and five *khil'ats* to him and I send two Egyptian girls as a present to you. My people, the Copts, hold these girls in great esteem. One of them is Mary and the other Sīrīn. I also send you twenty garments made of Egyptian linen of high quality. I also send you a mule for riding. In the end I pray again that you may have peace from God (*Zurqānī* and *Ṭabarī*).

From this letter it is clear that, though Muqauqīs treated the letter with respect he did not accept Islam.

### **Letter to the Chief of Baḥrain**

The Prophet also sent a letter to Mundhir Taimī, Chief of Baḥrain. This letter was carried by ‘Alā’ ibn Ḥaḍramī. The text of this letter has been lost. When it reached this Chief, he believed, and wrote back to the Prophet saying he and many of his friends and followers had decided to join Islam. Some, however, had decided to stay away. He also said that there were some Jews and Magians living under him. What was he to do about them?

The Prophet wrote again to this Chief thus:

I am glad at your acceptance of Islam. Your duty is to obey the delegates and messengers whom I should send to you. Whoever obeys them, obeys me. The messenger who took my letter to you praised you to me, and assured me of the sincerity of your belief. I have prayed to God for your people. Try, therefore, to teach them the ways and practices of Islam. Protect their property. Do not let anyone have more than four wives. The sins of the past are forgiven. As long as you are good and virtuous you will continue to rule over your people. As for Jews and Magians, they have only to pay a tax. Do not, therefore, make any other demands on them. As for the general population, those who do not have land enough to maintain them should have four dirhams each, and some cloth to wear (*Zurqānī* and *Khamīs*).

The Prophet also wrote to the King of ‘Umān, the Chief of Yamāmah, the King of Ghassān, the Chief of Banī Nahd, a tribe of Yemen, the Chief of Hamdān, another tribe of Yemen, the Chief of Banī ‘Alīm and the Chief of the Ḥaḍramī tribe. Most of them became Muslims.

These letters show how perfect was the Prophet’s faith in God. They also show that from the very beginning the Prophet believed that he had been sent by God not to any one people or territory, but to all the peoples of the world. It is true that these letters were received by their addressees in different ways. Some of them accepted Islam at once. Others treated the letters with consideration, but did not accept Islam. Still others treated them with ordinary courtesy. Still others showed contempt and pride. But it is true also—and history is witness to the fact—that the recipients of these letters or their peoples met with a fate in accordance with their treatment of these letters.

### **Fall of Khaibar**

As we have said above, the Jews and other opponents of Islam were now busy inflaming the tribes against the Muslims. They were now convinced that Arabia was unable to withstand the rising influence of Islam and that Arab tribes were unable to attack Medina. The Jews, therefore, began to intrigue with the Christian tribes settled on the southern frontier of the Roman Empire.

At the same time they started writing against the Prophet to their co-religionists in Iraq. By malicious propaganda carried on through correspondence they sought to excite the Chosroes of Iran against Islam. As a result of Jewish machinations the Chosroes turned against Islam, and even sent orders to the Governor of Yemen to arrest the Prophet. It was by special divine intervention and divine grace that the Prophet remained safe, and the foul plan of the Emperor of Iran was brought to nought. It should be obvious that, but for the divine help which attended the Prophet throughout his career, the tender movement of early Islam would have been nipped in the bud under the hostility and opposition of the Emperors of Rome and Iran. When the Chosroes ordered the arrest of the Prophet, it so happened that before the orders could be carried out the Emperor was deposed and put to death by his own son and his orders for the arrest of the Prophet cancelled by the new ruler. The officials of Yemen were impressed by this miracle; so the province of Yemen readily became part of the Muslim Empire. The intrigues which the Jews kept on hatching against Muslims and their town of Medina made it necessary that they should be driven farther away from Medina. If they had been allowed to continue to live nearby, their intrigues were almost certain to give rise to more and more bloodshed and violence. On returning from Ḥudaibiyyah the Prophet waited for five months and then decided to banish them from Khaibar. Khaibar was only a little distance from Medina and from here the Jews found it very easy to carry on their intrigues. With this intent, the Prophet (sometime in August 628 A.D.) marched to Khaibar. He had one thousand six hundred men with him. Khaibar, as we have said, was a well-fortified town. It was surrounded on all sides by rocks on which were perched little fortresses. To conquer such a place with so small a force was no easy task. The small posts lying on the outskirts of Khaibar fell after a little fighting. But when the Jews collected themselves into the central fort of the town, all attacks on it and all forms of strategy employed against it seemed to fail. One day the Prophet had a revelation that Khaibar would fall at the hands of ‘Alī. The following morning the Prophet announced this to his followers and said, "Today, I will hand over the black flag of Islam to him who is dear to God, His Prophet and all the Muslims. God has ordained that our victory at Khaibar should take place at his hands." The following day he sent for ‘Alī and handed to him the flag. ‘Alī did not wait. He took his men and attacked the central fort. In spite of the fact that the Jews had collected in force inside this fort, ‘Alī and his division were able to conquer it before dark. A peace treaty was signed. The conditions were that all Jews, their wives and their children would quit Khaibar and settle in some place far away from Medina. Their property and their belongings would pass into the hands of Muslims. Anyone who tried to conceal any of his property or stores, or made a wrong

statement, would not be protected by the peace. He would have to pay the penalty laid down for breach of faith.

Three interesting incidents took place in this siege of Khaibar. One of them constitutes a Sign of God and two afford insight into the high moral character of the Prophet.

A widow of Kinānah, a chief of Khaibar, was married to the Prophet. The Prophet saw that her face bore some marks, the impression of a hand. "What is this on your face, Ṣafīyyah?" asked the Prophet.

"It was like this," replied Ṣafīyyah. "I saw the moon fall in my lap in a dream. I related the dream to my husband. No sooner had I related the dream than my husband gave a heavy slap on my face and said, 'You desire to marry the King of Arabia'" (*Hishām*). The moon was the national emblem of Arabia. The moon in the lap denoted some intimate connection with the King of Arabia. A split moon or a dropping moon meant dissensions in the Arab State or its destruction.

The dream of Ṣafīyyah is a sign of the truth of the Holy Prophet. It is also a sign of the fact that God reveals the future to His servants through dreams. Believers have more of this grace than unbelievers. Ṣafīyyah was a Jewess when she saw this dream. It so happened that her husband was killed in the siege of Khaibar. This siege was a punishment for the Jewish breach of faith. Ṣafīyyah was made a prisoner and, in the distribution of prisoners, was given to a Companion. It was then found that she was the widow of a chief. It was, therefore, felt that it would be more in accord with her rank if she were to live with the Prophet. The Prophet, however, chose to give her the status of a wife and she agreed. In this way was her dream fulfilled.

There were two other incidents. One relates to a shepherd who looked after the sheep of a Jewish chief. This shepherd became a Muslim. After his conversion he said to the Prophet, "I cannot go back to my people now, O Prophet of God. What shall I do with the sheep and goats of my old master?"

"Set the faces of the animals towards Khaibar and give them a push. God will lead them back to their master" said the Prophet. The shepherd did as he was told, and the herd reached the Jewish fort. The guards at the fort received them (*Hishām*, Vol. 2, p. 191). The incident shows how seriously the Prophet regarded the question of individual rights and how important in his view it was for a trustee to discharge his trust. In war the property and belongings of the losers are rightfully appropriated by the victors. Ours is an age of civilization and culture, but can we show anything equal to this? Has it ever happened that a retreating enemy left behind stores which the victors sent back to their owners? In the present case the goats belonged to one of the combatants of the enemy side. The return of the goats meant making over to the enemy food which would last them for several months. With it the enemy

could resist the siege for a long time. Yet the Prophet had the goats returned, and this in order to impress upon a new convert the importance of discharging a trust.

The third incident relates to a Jewish woman who tried to poison the Prophet. She asked the Companions what part of an animal the Prophet relished for a dish. She was told that he preferred the shoulder of lamb or goat. The woman slaughtered a goat and made cutlets on hot stones. Then she mixed with them a deadly poison, especially in pieces cut from the shoulder, believing the Prophet would prefer them.

The Prophet was returning to his tent, having said the evening prayers in congregation. He saw this woman waiting for him near his tent and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you, woman?"

"Yes, Abul-Qāsim, you can accept a present from me." The Prophet asked a Companion to take whatever the woman had brought. When the Prophet sat down to his meal this present of roasted meat was also laid before him. The Prophet took a morsel. A Companion Bishr ibn al-Barā' ibn al-Ma'rūr also took a morsel. The other Companions present at the meal stretched their hands to eat the meat. But the Prophet stopped them saying, he thought the meat was poisoned. Upon this Bishr said that he also thought the same. He wanted to throw away the meat but was afraid it might disturb the Prophet. "Seeing you take a morsel," he said, "I also took one, but I soon began to wish you had not taken yours at all." Soon afterwards Bishr became ill and, according to some reports, died there and then. According to other reports he died after remaining ill for sometime. The Prophet then sent for the woman and asked her if she had poisoned the meat. The woman asked the Prophet how he ever got to know about it. The Prophet was holding a piece in his hand, and said, "My hand told me this," meaning he was able to judge from its taste. The woman admitted what she had done. "What made you do this?" asked the Prophet.

"My people were at war with you and my relations were killed in this battle, I decided to poison you, believing that if you were an impostor you would die and we should be safe, but if you were a Prophet, God would save you."

Hearing this explanation the Prophet forgave the woman, although she had earned, the penalty of death (*Muslim*). The Prophet was ever ready to forgive, and punished only when punishment was necessary, when it was feared the guilty one would continue to commit mischief.

### **The Prophet's Vision Fulfilled**

In the seventh year after the Hijrah, in February 629 to be exact, the Prophet was due to go to Mecca for the circuit of the Ka'bah. This had been



agreed to by the Meccan leaders. When the time came for the Prophet to depart, he collected two thousand followers and set out in the direction of Mecca. When he reached Marraẓẓuhrān, a halting place near Mecca, he ordered his followers to shed their armours. These were collected in one place. In strict conformity with the terms of the agreement signed at Ḥudaibiyyah, the Prophet and his followers entered the Sacred Enclosure, wearing only sheathed swords; Returning to Mecca after seven years' externment, it was no ordinary thing for two thousand persons to enter Mecca. They remembered the tortures to which they had been subjected during their days at Mecca. At the same time, they saw how gracious God had been to them in letting them come back and make a circuit of the Ka'bah in peace. Their anger was only equal to their joy. The people of Mecca had come out of their houses and perched themselves on the hill-tops to see the Muslims. The Muslims were full of zeal and enthusiasm and pride. They wanted to tell the Meccans that the promises which God had made to them had all come true. 'Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah started singing songs of war, but the Prophet stopped him saying, "No war songs. Only say, There is none to be worshipped except the One God. It is God Who helped the Prophet and raised the believers from degradation to dignity and Who drove off the enemy" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 73).

After circuiting the Ka'bah and running between the hills of Ṣafā and Marwah, the Prophet and his Companions stopped in Mecca for three days. 'Abbās had a widowed sister-in-law, Maimūnah, and he proposed that the Prophet should marry her. The Prophet agreed. On the fourth day the Meccans demanded the withdrawal of the Muslims. The Prophet ordered the withdrawal and asked his followers to start back for Medina. So religiously did he carry out the agreement and so careful was he to respect Meccan sentiments that he left his newly-wed wife behind in Mecca. He arranged that she should join him with the part of the caravan carrying the personal effects of the pilgrims. The Prophet mounted his camel and was soon out of the limits of the sacred precincts. For the night the Prophet camped at a place called Sarif, and there in his tent Maimūnah joined him.

We might have omitted this insignificant detail from a short account of the Life of the Prophet, but the incident has one important interest, and it is this. The Prophet has been attacked by European writers because he had several wives. They think a plurality of wives is evidence of personal laxity and love of pleasure. This impression of the Prophet's marriages, however, is belied by the devotion and self-consuming love which the Prophet's wives had for him. Their devotion and love proved that the Prophet's married life was pure, unselfish and spiritual. It was so singular in this respect that no man can be said to have treated his one wife so well as the Prophet treated his

many. If the Prophet's married life had been motivated by pleasure, it would most certainly have resulted in making his wives indifferent and even antagonistic to him. But the facts are quite otherwise. All the Prophet's wives were devoted to him, and their devotion was due to his unselfish and high-minded example. To his unselfish example they reacted by unsparing devotion. This is proved by many incidents recorded in history. One relates to Maimūnah herself. She met the Prophet for the first time in a tent in the desert. If their marital relations had been coarse, if the Prophet had preferred some wives to others because of their physical charms, Maimūnah would not have cherished her first meeting with the Prophet as a great memory. If her marriage with the Prophet had been associated with unpleasant or indifferent memories, she would have forgotten everything about it. Maimūnah lived long after the Prophet's death. She died full of years but could not forget what her marriage with the Prophet had meant for her. On the eve of her death at eighty, when the delights of the flesh are forgotten, when things only of lasting value and virtue move the heart, she asked to be buried at one day's journey from Mecca, at the very spot where the Prophet had camped on his return to Medina, and where after his marriage she had first met him. The world knows of many stories of love both real and imaginary, but not of many which are more moving than this.

Soon after this historic circuit of the Ka'bah, two renowned generals of the enemy joined Islam. They later became renowned generals of Islam. One was Khālīd bin Walīd whose genius and courage shook the Roman Empire to its foundations and under whose generalship country after country was added by Muslims to their Empire. The other was 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ, the conqueror of Egypt.

### **Battle of Mu'tah**

On return from the Ka'bah, the Prophet began to receive reports that Christian tribes on the Syrian border, instigated by Jews and pagans, were preparing for an attack upon Medina. He, therefore, despatched a party of fifteen to find out the truth. They saw an army massing on the Syrian border. Instead of returning at once with the report, they tarried. Their zeal for expounding Islam got the better of them, but the effect of their well-meaning zeal proved to be the very opposite of what they had wished and expected.

Reviewing events now, we can see that those who, under enemy provocation, were planning to attack the Prophet's homeland could be expected to behave in no other way. Instead of listening to the exposition, they took out their bows and started raining arrows on this party of fifteen. The party, however, remained unmoved. They received arrows in reply to arguments, but they did not turn back. They stood firm, fifteen against

thousands, and fell fighting.

The Prophet planned an expedition to punish the Syrians for this wanton cruelty, but in the meantime he had reports that the forces which had been concentrating on the border had dispersed. He, therefore, postponed his plans.

The Prophet, however, wrote a letter to the Emperor of Rome (or to the Chief of the Ghassān tribe who ruled Buṣra in the name of Rome). In this letter, we may presume, the Prophet complained of the preparations which had been visible on the Syrian border and of the foul and entirely unjust murder of the fifteen Muslims whom he had sent to report on the border situation. This letter was carried by al-Ḥarith, a Companion of the Prophet. He stopped en route at Mu'tah where he met Shurahbīl, a Ghassān chief acting as a Roman official. "Are you a messenger of Muḥammad?" asked this chief. On being told "Yes," he arrested him, tied him up and belaboured him to death. It may quite reasonably be assumed that this Ghassān chief was a leader of the army which had engaged and put to death the fifteen Muslims who had tried only to preach. The fact that he said to al-Ḥarith, "Perhaps you are carrying a message from Muḥammad" shows he was afraid lest the Prophet's complaint that tribesmen under the Kaiser had attacked the Muslims should reach the Kaiser. He was afraid lest he should have to account for what had happened. There was safety, he thought, in murdering the Prophet's envoy. The expectation was not realized. The Prophet got to know of the murder. To avenge this and the earlier murders, he raised a force of three thousand and despatched it to Syria under the command of Zaid bin Ḥārithah, freed slave of the Prophet, whom we mentioned in our account of his life in Mecca. The Prophet nominated Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib as the successor of Zaid, should Zaid die, and 'Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah, should Ja'far die. Should 'Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah also die, Muslims were to choose their own commander. A Jew who heard this exclaimed, "O Abul-Qāsim, if thou art a true Prophet, these three officers whom thou hast named are sure to die; for God fulfils the words of a Prophet." Turning to Zaid, he said, "Take it from me, if Muḥammad is true you will not return alive." Zaid, a true believer that he was, said in reply, "I may return alive or not, but Muḥammad is a true Prophet of God" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 75).

The following morning the Muslim army set out on its long march. The Prophet and the Companions went some distance with it. A large and important expedition such as this had never before gone without the Prophet commanding in person. As the Prophet walked along to bid the expedition farewell, he counselled and instructed. When they reached the spot where the people of Medina generally bade farewell to friends and relations going to Syria, the Prophet stopped and said:

I urge you to fear God and to deal justly with Muslims who go with you. Go to war in the name of Allah and fight the enemy in Syria, who is your enemy, as well as Allah's. When you are in Syria, you will meet those who remember God much in their houses of worship. You should have no dispute with them, and give no trouble to them. In the enemy country do not kill any women or children, nor the blind or the old; do not cut down any tree, nor pull down any building (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3).

Having said this, the Prophet returned and the Muslim army marched forward. It was the first Muslim army sent to fight the Christians. When Muslims reached the Syrian border, they heard that the Kaiser himself had taken the field with one hundred thousand of his own soldiers and another hundred thousand recruited from the Christian tribes of Arabia. Confronted by such large enemy numbers, the Muslims half wanted to stop on the way and send word to the Prophet at Medina. For he might be able to reinforce their numbers or wish to send fresh instructions. When the army leaders took counsel, 'Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah stood up, full of fire, and said, "My people, you set out from your homes to die as martyrs in the way of God, and now when martyrdom is in sight you seem to flinch. We have not fought so far because we were better equipped than the enemy in men or material. Our mainstay was our faith. If the enemy is so many times superior to us in numbers or equipment, what does it matter? One reward out of two we must have. We either win, or die as martyrs in the way of God." The army heard ibn Rawāḥah and was much impressed. He was right, they said, with one voice. The army marched on. As they marched, they saw the Roman army advancing towards them. So at Mu'tah the Muslims took up their positions and the battle began. Soon Zaid, the Muslim commander, was killed and the Prophet's cousin Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib received the standard and the command of the army. When he saw that enemy pressure was increasing and Muslims, because of utter physical inferiority, were not holding their own he dismounted from his horse and cut its legs. The action meant that at least he was not going to flee; he would prefer death to flight.

To cut the legs of one's mount was an Arab custom to prevent stampede and panic. Ja'far lost his right hand, but held the standard in his left. He lost his left hand also and then held the standard between the two stumps pressed to his chest. True to his promise, he fell down fighting. Then 'Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah, as the Prophet had ordered, grasped the standard and took over the command. He also fell fighting. The order of the Prophet now was for Muslims to take counsel together and elect a commander. But there was no time to hold an election. The Muslims might well have yielded to the vastly

superior numbers of the enemy. But Khālīd bin Walīd, accepting the suggestion of a friend, took the standard and went on fighting until evening came. The following day Khālīd took the field again with his crippled and tired force but employed a stratagem. He changed the positions of his men—those in front changed with those in the rear and those on the right flank changed with those on the left. They also raised some slogans. The enemy thought Muslims had received reinforcements overnight and withdrew in fear. Khālīd saved his remnants and returned. The Prophet had been informed of these events through a revelation. He collected the Muslims in the mosque. As he rose to address them his eyes were wet with tears. He said:

I wish to tell you about the army which left here for the Syrian border. It stood against the enemy and fought. First Zaid, then Ja'far and then 'Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah held the standard. All three fell, one after the other, fighting bravely. Pray for them all. After them the standard was held by Khālīd bin Walīd. He appointed himself. He is a sword among the swords of God. So he saved the Muslim army and returned (*Zādul-Ma'ād*, Vol. 1, and *Zurqānī*).

The Prophet's description of Khālīd became popular. Khālīd came to be known as "the Sword of God".

Being one of the later converts, Khālīd was often taunted by other Muslims. Once he and 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin 'Auf quarrelled over something. 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin 'Auf reported against Khālīd to the Prophet. The Prophet chid Khālīd and said, "Khālīd, you annoy one who has been serving Islam from the time of Badr. I say to you that even if you give away gold of the weight of Uḥud in the service of Islam, you will not become as deserving of divine reward as 'Abdur-Raḥmān."

"But they taunt me," said Khālīd, "and I have to reply."

Upon this the Prophet turned to others and said, "You must not taunt Khālīd. He is a sword among the swords of God which remains drawn against disbelievers."

The Prophet's description came to literal fulfilment a few years later.

On Khālīd's return with the Muslim army, some Muslims of Medina described the returning soldiers as defeatist and lacking in spirit. The general criticism was that they should all have died fighting. The Prophet chid the critics. Khālīd and his soldiers were not defeatist or lacking in spirit, he said. They were soldiers who returned again and again to attack. The words meant more than appeared on the surface. They foretold battles which Muslims were to fight with Syria.

## **The Prophet Marches on Mecca with 10,000 Followers**

In the eighth year of the Hijrah in the month of Ramadan (December, 629 A.D.) the Prophet set out on that last expedition which definitely established Islam in Arabia.

At Ḥudaibiyyah it was agreed between Muslims and disbelievers that Arab tribes should be allowed to join the disbelievers as well as the Prophet. It was also agreed that for ten years the parties would not go to war against each other unless one party should violate the pact by attacking the other. Under this agreement, the Banū Bakr joined the Meccans, while the Khuzā'ah entered into an alliance with Muslims. The Arab disbelievers had scant regard for treaties, especially for treaties with Muslims. It so happened that the Banū Bakr and the Khuzā'ah had some outstanding differences. The Banū Bakr consulted the Meccans about settling their old scores with the Khuzā'ah. They argued that the Ḥudaibiyyah treaty had been signed. The Khuzā'ah felt secure because of their pact with the Prophet. Now, therefore, was the time for them to attack the Khuzā'ah. The Meccans agreed. They and the Banū Bakr, accordingly, joined in a night attack on the Khuzā'ah and put to death many of their men. The Khuzā'ah sent forty of their men mounted on fleet camels to Medina to report this breach of agreement to the Prophet. They said it was up to Muslims now to march on Mecca to avenge this attack. The delegation met the Prophet and the Prophet told them unambiguously that he regarded their misfortunes as his own. He pointed to a rising cloud in the sky and said, "Like the rain drops which you see yonder, Muslim soldiers will drop down to your aid." The Meccans were perturbed over the news of the Khuzā'ah delegation to Medina. They sent Abū Sufyān post-haste to Medina to restrain Muslims from the attack. Abū Sufyān reached Medina and began to urge that as he was not present at Ḥudaibiyyah, a new peace will have to be signed by Muslims. The Prophet thought it unwise to answer this plea. Abū Sufyān became excited, went to the mosque and announced:

"O People, I renew, on behalf of the Meccans, our assurance of peace to you" (*Zurqānī*).

The people of Medina did not understand this speech. So, they only laughed. The Prophet said to Abū Sufyān, "Your statement is one-sided and we cannot agree to it." In the meantime, the Prophet had sent word to all the tribes. Assured that they were ready and on the march, he asked the Muslims of Medina to arm themselves and prepare. On the 1 January, the Muslim army set out on its march. At different points on their way, they were joined by other Muslim tribes. Only a few days' journey had been covered, when the army entered the wilderness of Fārān. Its number—exactly as the Prophet

Solomon had foretold long before—had now swelled to ten thousand. As this army marched towards Mecca, the silence all around seemed more and more ominous to the Meccans. They persuaded Abū Sufyān to move out again and find out what the Muslim design was. He was less than one day's journey out of Mecca when he saw at night the entire wilderness lit up with campfires. The Prophet had ordered a fire in front of every camp. The effect of these roaring fires in the silence and darkness of the night was awful. "What could this be?" Abū Sufyān asked his companions, "Has an army dropped from the heavens? I know of no Arab army so large." They named some tribes and at every name Abū Sufyān said, "No Arab tribe or people could have an army as large." Abū Sufyān and his friends were still speculating when a voice from the dark shouted, "Abū Ḥaṇṣalah"! (Ḥaṇṣalah was a son of Abū Sufyān)

"‘Abbās, are you here?" said Abū Sufyān.

"Yes, the Prophet's army is near. Act quickly or humility and defeat await you," replied ‘Abbās.

‘Abbās and Abū Sufyān were old friends. ‘Abbās insisted that Abū Sufyān should accompany him on the same mule and go to the Prophet. He gripped Abū Sufyān's hand, pulled him up and made him mount. Spurring the mule, they soon reached the Prophet's camp. ‘Abbās was afraid lest ‘Umar, who was guarding the Prophet's tent, should fall upon Abū Sufyān and kill him. But the Prophet had taken precautions, announcing that if anybody should meet Abū Sufyān he should make no attempt to kill him. The meeting impressed Abū Sufyān deeply. He was struck by the rise which had taken place in the fortunes of Islam. Here was the Prophet whom Meccans had banished from Mecca with but one friend in his company. Hardly seven years had passed since then, and now he was knocking at the gates of Mecca with ten thousand devotees. The tables had been completely turned. The fugitive Prophet who, seven years before, had escaped from Mecca for fear of life, had now returned to Mecca, and Mecca was unable to resist him.

### **Fall of Mecca**

Abū Sufyān must have been thinking furiously. Had not an incredibly great change taken place in seven years? And now as leader of the Meccans, what was he going to do? Was he going to resist, or was he going to submit? Troubled by such thoughts, he appeared stupefied to outside observers. The Prophet saw this agitated Meccan leader. He told ‘Abbās to take him away and entertain him for the night, promising to see him in the morning. Abū Sufyān spent the night with ‘Abbās. In the morning they called on the Prophet. It was time for the early morning prayers. The bustle and activity which Abū Sufyān saw at this early hour was quite unusual in his experience. He had not known—no Meccan had known—such early risers as Muslims

had become under the discipline of Islam. He saw all the Muslim campers turned out for their morning prayers. Some went to and fro in quest of water for ablutions, others to supervise the lining up of worshippers for the service. Abū Sufyān could not understand this activity early in the morning. He was frightened. Was a new plan afoot to overawe him?

"What can they all be doing?" he asked in sheer consternation.

"Nothing to be afraid of," replied 'Abbās. "They are only preparing for the morning prayers."

Abū Sufyān then saw thousands of Muslims lined up behind the Prophet, making the prescribed movements and devotions at the bidding of the Prophet—half prostrations, full prostrations, standing up again, and so on. 'Abbās was on guard duty, so he was free to engage Abū Sufyān in conversation.

"What could they be doing now?" asked Abū Sufyān. "Everything the Prophet does, is done by the rest."

"What are you thinking about? It is only the Muslim prayer, Abū Sufyān. Muslims would do anything at the bidding of the Prophet—give up food and drink for instance."

"True," said Abū Sufyān, "I have seen great courts. I have seen the court of the Chosroes and the court of the Kaiser, but I have never seen any people as devoted to their leader as Muslims are to their Prophet" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2, p. 90).

Filled with fear and guilt, Abū Sufyān went on to ask 'Abbās if he would not request the Prophet to forgive his own people—meaning the Meccans.

The morning prayers over, 'Abbās led Abū Sufyān to the Prophet.

Said the Prophet to Abū Sufyān, "Has it not yet dawned upon you that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah?"

"My father and my mother be a sacrifice to you. You have ever been kind, gentle and considerate to your kith and kin. I am certain now that if there were anyone else worthy of worship, we might have had some help against you from him."

"Has it not also dawned upon you that I am a Messenger of Allah?"

"My father and my mother be a sacrifice to you, on this I still have some doubts."

While Abū Sufyān hesitated to acknowledge the Prophet as Messenger of God, two of his companions who had marched out of Mecca with him to do reconnoitring duty for the Meccans, became Muslims. One of them was Ḥakīm bin Ḥizām. A little later, Abū Sufyān also joined, but his inner conversion seems to have been deferred until after the conquest of Mecca. Ḥakīm bin Ḥizām asked the Prophet if the Muslims would destroy their own kith and kin.



"These people," said the Prophet, "have been very cruel. They have committed excesses and proved themselves of bad faith. They have gone back on the peace they signed at Ḥudaibiyyah and attacked the Khuzā'ah savagely. They have made war in a place which had been made inviolate by God."

"It is quite true, O Prophet of God, our people have done exactly as you say, but instead of marching upon Mecca you should have attacked the Hawāzin," suggested Ḥakīm.

"The Hawāzin also have been cruel and savage. I hope God will enable me to realize all the three ends: the conquest of Mecca, the ascendancy of Islam and the defeat of the Hawāzin."

Abū Sufyān, who had been listening, now asked the Prophet: "If the Meccans draw not the sword, will they have peace?"

"Yes," replied the Prophet, "everyone who stays indoors will have peace."

"But O Prophet," intervened 'Abbās, "Abū Sufyān is much concerned about himself. He wishes to know if his rank and position among the Meccans will be respected."

"Very good," said the Prophet: "Whoever takes shelter in the house of Abū Sufyān will have peace. Whoever enters the Sacred Mosque will have peace. Those who lay down their arms will have peace. Those who close their doors and stay in will have peace. Those who stay in the house of Ḥakīm bin Hizām will have peace."

Saying this, he called Abū Ruwaiḥah and handed over to him the standard of Islam. Abū Ruwaiḥah had entered into a pact of brotherhood with Bilāl, the Abyssinian slave. Handing over the standard, the Prophet said, "Whoever stands under this standard will have peace." At the same time, he ordered Bilāl to march in front of Abū Ruwaiḥah and announce to all concerned that there was peace under the standard held by Abū Ruwaiḥah.

### **The Prophet Enters Mecca**

The arrangement was full of wisdom. When Muslims were persecuted in Mecca, Bilāl, one of their targets, was dragged about the streets by ropes tied to his legs. Mecca gave no peace to Bilāl, but only physical pain, humiliation and disgrace. How revengeful Bilāl must have felt on this day of his deliverance. To let him avenge the savage cruelties suffered by him in Mecca was necessary, but it had to be within the limits laid down by Islam. Accordingly, the Prophet did not let Bilāl draw the sword and smite the necks of his former persecutors. That would have been un-Islamic. Instead, the Prophet handed to Bilāl's brother the standard of Islam, and charged Bilāl with the duty of offering peace to all his former persecutors under the standard borne by his brother. There was beauty and appeal in this revenge. We have to picture Bilāl marching in front of his brother and inviting his

enemies to peace. His passion for revenge could not have lasted. It must have dissolved as he advanced inviting Meccans to peace under a standard held aloft by his brother.

While the Muslims marched towards Mecca, the Prophet had ordered ‘Abbās to take Abū Sufyān and his friends to a spot from where they could easily view the Muslim army, its behaviour and bearing. ‘Abbās did so and from a vantage point Abū Sufyān and his friends watched the Arab tribes go past on whose power the Meccans had banked all these years for their plots against Islam. They marched that day not as soldiers of disbelief but as soldiers of belief. They raised now the slogans of Islam, not the slogans of their pagan days. They marched in formation, not to put an end to the Prophet’s life, but to lay down their lives to save his; not to shed his blood, but their own for his sake. Their ambition that day was not to resist the Prophet’s Message and save the superficial solidarity of their own people. It was to carry to all parts of the world the very Message they had so far resisted. It was to establish the unity and solidarity of man. Column after column marched past until the Ashja‘ tribe came in Abū Sufyān’s view. Their devotion to Islam and their self-sacrificing zeal could be seen in their faces, and heard in their songs and slogans.

"Who can they be?" asked Abū Sufyān.

"They are the Ashja‘ tribe."

Abū Sufyān looked astonished and said, "In all Arabia, no one bore greater enmity to Muḥammad."

"We owe it to the grace of God. He changed the hearts of the enemy of Islam as soon as He deemed fit," said ‘Abbās.

Last of all came the Prophet, surrounded by the columns of Anṣār and Muhājirīn. They must have been about two thousand strong, dressed in suits of armour. The valiant ‘Umar directed their marching. The sight proved the most impressive of all. The devotion of these Muslims, their determination and their zeal seemed overflowing. When Abū Sufyān’s eyes fell on them, he was completely overpowered.

"Who can they be?" he asked.

"They are the Anṣār and the Muhājirīn surrounding the Prophet," replied ‘Abbās.

"No power on earth could resist this army," said Abū Sufyān, and then, addressing ‘Abbās more specifically, "'Abbās, your nephew has become the most powerful king in the world."

"You are still far from the truth, Abū Sufyān. He is no king; he is a Prophet, a Messenger of God," replied ‘Abbās.

"Yes, yes, let it be as you say, a Prophet, not a king," added Abū Sufyān.

As the Muslim army marched past Abū Sufyān, the commander of the Anṣār, Sa'd bin 'Ubādah happened to eye Abū Sufyān and could not resist saying God that day had made it lawful for them to enter Mecca by force and that the Quraish would be humiliated.

As the Prophet was passing, Abū Sufyān raised his voice and addressing the Prophet said, "Have you allowed the massacre of your own kith and kin? I heard the commander of the Anṣār, Sa'd and his companions say so. They said it was a day of slaughter. The sacredness of Mecca will not avert bloodshed and the Quraish will be humiliated. Prophet of God, you are the best, the most forgiving, the most considerate of men. Will you not forgive and forget whatever was done by your own people?"

Abū Sufyān's appeal went home. Those very Muslims who used to be insulted and beaten in the streets of Mecca, who had been dispossessed and driven out of their homes, began to entertain feelings of mercy for their old persecutors. "Prophet of God," they said, "the accounts which the Anṣār have heard of the excesses and cruelties committed by Meccans against us, may lead them to seek revenge. We know not what they may do."

The Prophet understood this. Turning to Abū Sufyān, he said, "What Sa'd has said is quite wrong. It is not the day of slaughter. It is the day of forgiveness. The Quraish and the Ka'bah will be honoured by God."

Then he sent for Sa'd, and ordered him to hand over the Anṣār flag to his son, Qais (*Hishām*, Vol. 2). The command of the Anṣār thus passed from Sa'd to Qais. It was a wise step. It placated the Meccans and saved the Anṣār disappointment. Qais, a pious young man, was fully trusted by the Prophet.

An incident of his last days illustrates the piety of his character. Lying on his deathbed, Qais received his friends. Some came and some did not. He could not understand this and asked why some of his friends had not come to see him. "Your charity is abundant," explained one.

"You have been helping the needy by your loans. There are many in the town who are in debt to you. Some may have hesitated to come lest you should ask them for the return of the loans."

"Then I have been the cause of keeping my friends away. Please announce that no one now owes anything to Qais." After this announcement Qais had so many visitors during his last days that the steps to his house gave way.

When the Muslim army had marched past, 'Abbās told Abū Sufyān to hasten for Mecca and announce to the Meccans that the Prophet had come and explain to them how they could all have peace. Abū Sufyān reached Mecca

with this message of peace for his town, but his wife, Hind, notorious for her hostility towards Muslims, met him. A confirmed disbeliever, she was yet a brave woman. She caught Abū Sufyān by the beard and called on Meccans to come and kill her cowardly husband. Instead of moving his townsmen to sacrifice their lives for the defence and honour of their town, he was inviting them to peace.

But Abū Sufyān could see that Hind was behaving foolishly "That time is gone," said he. "You had better go home and sit behind closed doors. I have seen the Muslim army. Not all Arabia could withstand it now."

He then explained the conditions under which the Prophet had promised peace to the Meccans. On hearing these conditions the people of Mecca ran for protection to the places which had been named in the Prophet's proclamation. From this proclamation eleven men and four women had been excepted. The offences which they had committed were very grave. Their guilt was not that they had not believed nor that they had taken part in wars against Islam; it was that they had committed inhumanities which could not be passed over. Actually, however, only four persons were put to death.

The Prophet had ordered Khālīd bin Walīd not to permit any fighting unless they were fought against and unless the Meccans first started fighting. The part of the town which Khālīd entered had not heard the conditions of peace. The Meccans posted in that part challenged Khālīd and invited him to fight. An encounter ensued in which twelve or thirteen men were killed (*Hishām*, Vol. 2, p. 217). Khālīd was a man of fiery temper. Somebody, warned by this incident, ran to the Prophet to request him to stop Khālīd from fighting. If Khālīd did not stop, said this man, all Mecca would be massacred.

The Prophet sent for Khālīd at once and said, "Did I not stop you from fighting?"

"Yes, you did, O Prophet of God, but these people attacked us first and began to shoot arrows at us. For a time I did nothing and told them we did not want to fight. But they did not listen, and did not stop. So I replied to them, and dispersed them."

This was the only untoward incident which took place on this occasion. The conquest of Mecca was thus brought about practically without bloodshed.

The Prophet entered Mecca. They asked him where he would stop.

"Has 'Aqīl left any house for me to live in?" asked the Prophet. 'Aqīl was the Prophet's cousin, a son of his uncle. During the years of the Prophet's refuge at Medina, his relations had sold all his property. There was no house left which the Prophet could call his own. Accordingly the Prophet said, "I will stop at Ḥanīf Banī Kinānah." This was an open space. The Quraish and

the Kinānah once assembled there and swore that unless the Banū Hāshim and the Banū ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib handed over the Prophet to them to deal with him as they liked, they would have no dealings with the two tribes. They would neither sell anything to them nor buy anything from them. It was after this solemn declaration that the Prophet, his uncle Abū Ṭālib, his family and followers, had to take refuge in the valley of Abū Ṭālib and suffer a severe blockade and boycott lasting for three years.

The place which the Prophet chose for his stay was, therefore, full of significance. The Meccans had once assembled there and taken the oath that unless the Prophet was made over to them, they would not be at peace with his tribe. Now the Prophet had come to the same spot. It was as though he had come to tell the Meccans: "You wanted me here, so here I am. But not in the way you wanted. You wanted me as your victim, one completely at your mercy. But I am here in power. Not only my own people, but the whole of Arabia is now with me. You wanted my people to hand me over to you. Instead of that, they have handed you over to me." This day of victory was a Monday. The day on which the Prophet and Abū Bakr left the cave of Thaur for their journey to Medina was also a Monday. On that day, standing on the hill of Thaur, the Prophet turned to Mecca and said, 'Mecca! you are dearer to me than any other place but your people would not let me live here.'

When the Prophet entered Mecca, mounted on his camel, Abū Bakr walked with him holding a stirrup. As he walked along, Abū Bakr recited verses from the Sūrah Al-Faṭḥ in which the conquest of Mecca had been foretold years before.

### **Ka‘bah Cleared of Idols**

The Prophet made straight for the Ka‘bah and performed the circuit of the holy precincts seven times, mounted on his camel. Staff in hand, he went round the house which had been built by the Patriarch Abraham and his son Ishmael for the worship of the One and Only God, but which by their misguided children had been allowed to degenerate into a sanctuary for idols. The Prophet smote one by one the three hundred and sixty idols in the house. As an idol fell, the Prophet would recite the verse, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away fast." This verse was revealed before the Prophet left Mecca for Medina and is part of the chapter Banī Isrā’īl. In this chapter was foretold the flight of the Prophet and the conquest of Mecca. The chapter is a Meccan chapter, a fact admitted even by European writers. The verses which contain the prophecy of the Prophet’s flight from Mecca, and the subsequent conquest of Mecca are as follows:

And say 'O my Lord, make my entry a good entry, and make my going

out a good outgoing. And grant me from Thyself a power that may help me.' And, 'Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away fast!' (17:81-82).

The conquest of Mecca is foretold here in the form of a prayer taught to the Prophet. The Prophet is taught to pray for entering Mecca and for departing from it under good auspices; and for the help of God in assuring an ultimate victory of truth over falsehood. The prophecy had literally come true. The recitation of these verses by Abū Bakr was appropriate. It braced up the Muslims, and reminded the Meccans of the futility of their fight against God and of the truth of the promises made by God to the Prophet.

With the conquest of Mecca, the Ka'bah was restored to the functions for which it had been consecrated many thousands of years before by the Patriarch Abraham. The Ka'bah was again devoted to the worship of the One and Only God. The idols were broken. One of these was Hubal. When the Prophet smote it with his staff, and it fell down in fragments, Zubair looked at Abū Sufyān and with a half-suppressed smile reminded him of Uḥud. "Do you remember the day when Muslims wounded and exhausted stood by and you wounded them further by shouting, 'Glory to Hubal, Glory to Hubal'? Was it Hubal who gave you victory on that day? If it was Hubal, you can see the end it has come to today."

Abū Sufyān was impressed, and admitted it was quite true that if there had been a God other than the God of Muḥammad, they might have been spared the disgrace and defeat they had met with that day.

The Prophet then ordered the wiping out of the pictures which had been drawn on the walls of the Ka'bah. Having ordered this the Prophet said two rak'ats of prayer as thanks-giving to God. He then withdrew to the open court and said another two rak'ats of prayer. The duty of wiping out the pictures had been entrusted to 'Umar. He had all the pictures obliterated except that of Abraham. When the Prophet returned to inspect and found this picture intact, he asked 'Umar why he had spared this one. Did he not remember the testimony of the Quran that Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian, but a single-minded and obedient Muslim? (3:68).

It was an insult to the memory of Abraham, a great exponent of the Oneness of God to have his picture on the walls of the Ka'bah. It was as though Abraham could be worshipped equally with God.

It was a memorable day, a day full of the Signs of God.

Promises made by God to the Prophet, at a time when their fulfilment seemed impossible, had been fulfilled at last. The Prophet was the centre of devotion and faith. In and through his person, God had manifested Himself, and shown His face, as it were, again. The Prophet sent for water of the

Zamzam. He drank some of it and with the rest performed ablutions. So devoted were Muslims to the Prophet's person, that they would not let a drop of this water fall on the ground. They received the water in the hollows of their hands to wet their bodies with it; in such reverence did they hold it. The pagans who witnessed these scenes of devotion said again and again that they had never seen an earthly king to whom his people were so devoted (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 99).

### **The Prophet Forgives His Enemies**

All rites and duties over, the Prophet addressed the Meccans and said: "You have seen how true the promises of God have proved. Now tell me what punishment you should have for the cruelties and enormities you committed against those whose only fault was that they invited you to the worship of the One and Only God."

To this the Meccans replied, "We expect you to treat us as Joseph treated his erring brothers."

By significant coincidence, the Meccans used in their plea for forgiveness the very words which God had used in the *Sūrah Yūsuf*, revealed ten years before the conquest of Mecca. In this the Prophet was told that he would treat his Meccan persecutors as Joseph had treated his brothers. By asking for the treatment which Joseph had meted out to his brothers, the Meccans admitted that the Prophet of Islam was the like of Joseph and as Joseph was granted victory over his brothers the Prophet had been granted victory over the Meccans. Hearing the Meccans' plea, the Prophet declared at once: "By God, you will have no punishment today and no reproof" (*Hishām*).

While the Prophet was engaged in expressing his gratitude to God and in carrying out other devotions at the Ka'bah, and while he was addressing the Meccans announcing his decision to forgive and forget, misgivings arose in the minds of the Anṣār, the Medinite Muslims. Some of them were upset over the scenes of home-coming and of reconciliation which they witnessed on the return of Meccan Muslims to Mecca. Was the Prophet parting company with them, his friends in adversity who provided the first home to Islam? Was the Prophet going to settle down at Mecca, the town from which he had to flee for his life? Such fears did not seem too remote now that Mecca had been conquered and his own tribe had joined Islam. The Prophet might want to settle down in it. God informed the Prophet of these misgivings of the Anṣār. He raised his head, looked at the Anṣār and said "You seem to think Muḥammad is perturbed by the love of his town, and by the ties which bind him to his tribe." "It is true," said the Anṣār, "we did think of this."

"Do you know," said the Prophet, "Who I am? I am a Servant of God and His Messenger. How can I give you up? You stood by me, and sacrificed your lives when the Faith of God had no earthly help. How can I give you up and settle elsewhere? No, Anṣār, this is impossible. I left Mecca for the sake of God and I cannot return to it. I will live and die with you."

The Anṣār were moved by this singular expression of love and loyalty. They regretted their distrust of God and His Prophet, wept and asked to be forgiven. They explained that they would not have any peace if the Prophet left their town and went elsewhere. The Prophet replied that their fear was understandable and that, after their explanation, God and His Prophet were satisfied about their innocence and acknowledged their sincerity and loyalty.

How must the Meccans have felt at this time? True they did not shed the tears of devotion but their hearts must have been full of regret and remorse. For, had they not cast away with their own hands the gem which had been found in their own town? They had all the more reason to regret this because the Prophet, having come back to Mecca, had decided to leave it again for Medina.

### **‘Ikrimah Becomes Muslim**

Of those who had been excepted from the general amnesty, some were forgiven on the recommendation of the Companions. Among those who were thus forgiven was ‘Ikrimah, a son of Abū Jahl. ‘Ikrimah’s wife was a Muslim at heart. She requested the Prophet to forgive him. The Prophet forgave him. At the time ‘Ikrimah was trying to escape to Abyssinia. His wife pursued him and found that he was about to embark. She reproved him. "Are you running away from a man as gentle and kind as the Prophet?" she said.

‘Ikrimah was astonished and asked whether she really thought the Prophet would forgive him. ‘Ikrimah’s wife assured him that even he would be forgiven by the Prophet. In fact she had had word from him already. ‘Ikrimah gave up his plan of escaping to Abyssinia and returned to see the Prophet. "I understand from my wife that you have forgiven even one like me," he said.

"Your wife is right. I have really forgiven you," said the Prophet.

‘Ikrimah decided that a person capable of forgiving his deadliest enemies could not be false. He, therefore, declared his faith in Islam. "I bear witness that God is One and has no equal and I bear witness that you are His Servant and His Messenger." So saying, ‘Ikrimah bent his head in shame. The Prophet consoled him. "'Ikrimah," said he, "I have not only forgiven you, but as proof of my regard for you, I have decided to invite you to ask me for anything I can give."



‘Ikrimah replied, "There is nothing more or better I can ask you for than that you should pray for me to God and ask for His forgiveness and whatever excesses and enormities I have committed against you."

Hearing this entreaty, the Prophet prayed to God at once and said: "My God, forgive the enmity which ‘Ikrimah has borne against me. Forgive him the abuse which has issued from his lips."

The Prophet then stood up and put his mantle over ‘Ikrimah and said, "Whoever comes to me, believing in God, is one with me. My house is as much his as mine."

The conversion of ‘Ikrimah fulfilled a prophecy which the Holy Prophet had made many years before. The Prophet, addressing his Companions, had once said: "I have had a vision in which I saw that I was in Paradise. I saw there a bunch of grapes. When I asked for whom the bunch was meant, someone replied saying, 'For Abū Jahl'." Referring to this vision on this occasion of the conversion of ‘Ikrimah, the Prophet said he did not understand the vision at first. How could Abū Jahl, an enemy of believers, enter Paradise and how could he have a bunch of grapes provided for him. "But now," said the Prophet, "I understand my vision; the bunch of grapes was meant for ‘Ikrimah. Only, instead of the son I was shown the father, a substitution common in visions and dreams" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 104).

Of the persons who had been ordered to be executed as exceptions to the general amnesty was one who had been responsible for the cruel murder of Zainab, a daughter of the Prophet. This man was Habbār. He had cut the girths of Zainab's camel, on which Zainab fell to the ground and, being with child, suffered abortion. A little later she died. This was one of the inhumanities which he had committed and for which he deserved the penalty of death. This man now came to the Prophet and said, "Prophet of God, I ran away from you and went to Iran, but the thought came to me that God had rid us of our pagan beliefs and saved us from spiritual death. Instead of going to others and seeking shelter with them why not go to the Prophet himself, acknowledge my faults and my sins and ask for his forgiveness?"

The Prophet was moved and said, "Habbār, if God has planted in your heart the love of Islam, how can I refuse to forgive you? I forgive everything you have done before this."

One cannot describe in detail the enormities these men had committed against Islam and Muslims. Yet how easily the Prophet forgave them! This spirit of forgiveness converted the most stone-hearted adversaries into devotees of the Prophet.

### Battle of Ḥunain

The Prophet's entry into Mecca was sudden. Tribes in the vicinity of Mecca, especially those in the south, remained unaware of the event until sometime later. On hearing of it, they began to assemble their forces and to prepare for a fight with the Muslims. There were two Arab tribes, the Hawāzin and the Thaḳīf, unusually proud of their valiant traditions. They took counsel together and after some deliberation elected Malik ibn 'Auf as their leader. They then invited the tribes round about to join them. Among the tribes invited was the Banū Sa'd. The Prophet's wet-nurse, Halīmah, belonged to this tribe and the Prophet as a child had lived among them. Men of this tribe collected in force and set out towards Mecca taking with them their families and their effects. Asked why they had done so, they replied it was in order that the soldiers might be reminded that, if they turned back and fled, their wives and children would be taken prisoners and their effects looted—so strong was their determination to fight and destroy the Muslims. This force descended in the valley of Rauṭās most suitable base for a battle, with its natural shelters, abundance of fodder and water, and facilities for cavalry movements. When the Prophet got to know of this, he sent 'Abdullāh bin Abī Ḥadwad to report on the situation. 'Abdullāh reported that there were military concentrations in the place and there was determination to kill and be killed. The tribe was renowned for its skill in archery, and the base they had selected afforded a very great advantage to them. The Prophet approached Ṣafwān, a prosperous chief of Mecca for the loan of suits of armour and weapons. Ṣafwān replied, "You seem to put pressure on me and think I will be overawed by your growing power and make over to you whatever you ask?"

The Prophet replied, "We wish to seize nothing. We only want a loan of these things, and are ready to give a suitable surety."

Ṣafwān was satisfied and agreed to lend the material. Altogether he supplied one hundred suits of armour and a suitable number of weapons. The Prophet borrowed three thousand lances from his cousin, Naufal bin Ḥārith and about thirty thousand dirhams from 'Abdullāh bin Rabī'a (*Mu'atta'*, *Musnad* and *Ḥalbiyyah*). When the Muslim army set out towards the Hawāzin, the Meccans expressed a wish to join the Muslim side. They were not Muslims, but they had agreed to live under a Muslim regime. Accordingly, two thousand Meccans joined the Muslims. On the way, they came to the noted Arab shrine, Dhāt Anwāt. Here was an old jujube tree, sacred to the Arabs. When Arabs bought arms they first went to Dhāt Anwāt and hung them in the shrine to receive its blessings for their arms. When the Muslim army passed by this shrine some of the soldiers said, "Prophet of God, there should be a Dhāt Anwāt for us also."

The Prophet disapproved and said, "You talk like the followers of Moses. When Moses was going to Canaan, his followers saw on the way people worshipping idols, and said to Moses, 'O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods'" (Quran 7:139). The Prophet urged Muslims to always remember that Allah was Great and to pray to Him to save them from the superstitions of earlier peoples.

### **"The Prophet of God Calls You"**

Before the Muslim army reached Ḥunain, the Hawāzin and their allies had already prepared a number of ambushes from which to attack the Muslims, like the foxholes and camouflaged artillery positions of modern warfare. They had built walls around them. Behind the walls were soldiers lying in wait for the Muslims. A narrow gorge was left for Muslims to pass through. Much the larger part of the army was posted to these ambushes, while a small number was made to line up in front of their camels. Muslims thought enemy numbers to be no more than they could see. So they went forward and attacked. When they had advanced far and the hiding enemy was satisfied that they could be attacked very easily, the soldiers lined up in front of the camels and attacked the centre of the Muslim army while the hiding archers rained their arrows on the flanks. The Meccans, who had joined for a chance to display their valour, could not stand this double attack by the enemy. They ran back to Mecca. Muslims were accustomed to difficult situations, but when two thousand soldiers mounted on horses and camels pierced their way through the Muslim army, the animals of the Muslims also took fright. There was panic in the army. Pressure came from three sides, resulting in a general rout. In this, only the Prophet, with twelve Companions, stood unmoved. Not that all the Companions had fled from the field. About a hundred of them still remained, but they were at some distance from the Prophet. Only twelve remained to surround the Prophet. One Companion reports that he and his friends did all they could to steer their animals towards the battlefield. But the animals had been put to fright by the stampede of the Meccan animals. No effort seemed to avail. They pulled at the reins but the animals refused to turn. Sometimes they would pull the heads of the animals so as almost to make them touch their tails. But when they spurred the animals towards the battlefield, they would not go. Instead, they moved back all the more. "Our hearts beat in fear—fear for the safety of the Prophet," says this Companion, "but there was nothing we could do." This was how the Companions were placed. The Prophet himself stood with a handful of men, exposed on three sides to volleys of arrows. There was only one narrow pass behind them through which only a few men could pass at a time. At that moment Abū Bakr dismounted and holding the reins of the Prophet's mule

said, "Prophet of God, let us withdraw for a while and let the Muslim army collect itself."

"Release the reins of my mule, Abū Bakr," said the Prophet. Saying, this, he spurred the animal forward into the gorge on both sides of which were enemy ambuscades from where the archers were shooting. As the Prophet spurred his mount, he said, "I am a Prophet. I am no pretender. I am a son of 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib" (*Bukhārī*). These words spoken at a time of extreme danger to his person are full of significance. They stressed the fact that the Prophet was really a Prophet, a true Messenger of God. By stressing this, he meant that he was not afraid of death or of the failure of his cause. But if, in spite of being overwhelmed by archers he remained safe, Muslims should not attribute any divine qualities to him. For he was but a human being, a son of 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib. How careful was the Prophet ever to impress upon his followers the difference between faith and superstition. After uttering these memorable words, the Prophet called for 'Abbās. 'Abbās had a powerful voice. The Prophet said to him, "'Abbās, raise your voice and remind the Muslims of the oath they took under the tree at Ḥudaibiyyah, and of what they were taught at the time of the revelation of the *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah. Tell them, the Prophet of God calls them." 'Abbās raised his powerful voice. The message of the Prophet fell like thunder, not on deaf ears but on ears agog. It had an electric effect. The very Companions who had found themselves powerless to urge their mounts towards the battlefield, began to feel they were no longer in this world but in the next, facing God on the Judgement Day. The voice of 'Abbās did not sound like his own voice but the voice of the angel beckoning them to render an account of their deeds. There was nothing then to stop them from turning to the battlefield again. Many of them dismounted and with only sword and shield rushed to the battlefield, leaving their animals to go where they liked. Others dismounted, cut off the heads of their animals and rushed back on foot to the Prophet. It is said that the Anṣār on that day ran towards the Prophet with the speed with which a mother-camel or a mother-cow runs to her young on hearing its cries. Before long the Prophet was surrounded by a large number of Companions, mostly Anṣār. The enemy again suffered a defeat.

The presence of Abū Sufyān on the side of the Prophet on this day was a mighty divine Sign, a Sign of the power of God on the one hand and of the purifying example of the Prophet on the other. Only a few days before, Abū Sufyān was a bloodthirsty enemy of the Prophet, commander of a bloodthirsty army determined to destroy the Muslims. But here, on this day the same Abū Sufyān stood by the side of the Prophet, a friend, follower and Companion. When the enemy camels stampeded, Abū Sufyān, a wise and seasoned general, saw that his own horse was likely to run wild. Quickly he

dismounted and, holding the stirrup of the Prophet's mule, started going on foot. Sword in hand, he walked by the side of the Prophet determined not to let anyone come near the Prophet's person without first attacking and killing him. The Prophet watched this change in Abū Sufyān with delight and astonishment.

He reflected on this fresh evidence of the power of God. Only ten or fifteen days before, this man was raising an army to put an end to the Movement of Islam. But a change had come. An erstwhile enemy commander now stood by the Prophet's side, as an ordinary foot-soldier, holding the stirrup of his Master's mule, and determined to die for his sake. 'Abbās saw the astonishment in the Prophet's look and said, "Prophet of God, this is Abū Sufyān, son of your uncle, and so your brother. Aren't you pleased with him?"

"I am," said the Prophet, "and I pray, God may forgive him all the wrongs he has done." Then turning to Abū Sufyān himself, he said, "Brother!" Abū Sufyān could not restrain the affection welling up in his heart. He bent and kissed the Prophet's foot in the stirrup he was holding (*Halbiyyah*).

After the battle of Ḥunain, the Prophet returned the war material he had received on loan. While returning it he compensated the lenders many times over. Those who had made the loan were touched by the care and consideration which the Prophet had shown in returning the material and in compensating the lenders. They felt the Prophet was no ordinary man, but one whose moral example stood high above others. No wonder, Ṣafwān joined Islam at once.

### **A Sworn Enemy Becomes a Devoted Follower**

The battle of Ḥunain ever reminds historians of another interesting incident which took place while it was in progress. Shaibah, a resident of Mecca and in the service of the Ka'bah, took part in the encounter on the side of the enemy. He says that he had only one aim before him in this battle—that when the two armies met, he would find an opportunity to kill the Prophet. He was determined that even if the whole world joined the Prophet (let alone the whole of Arabia), he would stand out and continue to oppose Islam. When fighting became brisk, Shaibah drew his sword and started advancing towards the Prophet. As he came very near, he became unnerved. His determination began to shake. "When I got very near the Prophet," says Shaibah, "I seemed to see a flame threatening to consume me. I then heard the voice of the Prophet saying, 'Shaibah, come near me.' When I got near, the Prophet moved his hand over my chest in great affection. As he did so, he said, 'God, relieve Shaibah of all satanic thought.'" With this little touch of affection Shaibah changed. His hostility and enmity evaporated, and from that moment Shaibah held the Prophet dearer than anything else in the world. As Shaibah changed,

the Prophet invited him to come forward and fight. "At that moment," says Shaibah, "I had but one thought, and that was to die for the sake of the Prophet. Even if my father had come my way, I would have hesitated not a moment to thrust my sword in his chest" (*Halbiyyah*).

The Prophet then marched towards Ṭā'if, the town which had stoned him and driven him out. The Prophet besieged the town, but accepting the suggestion of some friends abandoned the siege. Later, the people of Ṭā'if joined Islam voluntarily.

### **The Prophet Distributes Booty**

After the conquest of Mecca and the victory of Ḥunain, the Prophet was faced with the task of distributing the money and property paid as ransom or abandoned in the battlefield by the enemy. If custom had been followed, this money and property should have been distributed among the Muslim soldiers who took part in these encounters. But on this occasion, instead of distributing it among the Muslims, the Prophet distributed it among the Meccans and the people who lived round about Mecca. These people had yet to show an inclination towards the Faith. Many were professed deniers. Those who had declared their faith were yet new to it. They had no idea how self-denying a people could become after they had accepted Islam. But, instead of benefiting by the example of self-denial and self-sacrifice which they saw, instead of reciprocating the good treatment they received from the Muslims, they became more avaricious and greedier than ever. Their demands began to mount. They mobbed the Prophet, and pushed him to a spot under a tree with his mantle having been torn from his shoulders. At last the Prophet said to the crowd, "I have nothing else to give. If I had, I would have made it over to you. I am no miser, nor am I mean" (*Bukhārī*, Chap. on *Faraḍūl-Khums*).

Then going near his dromedary and pulling out a hair, he said to the crowd, "Out of this money and property I want nothing at all, not even as much as a hair. Only, I must have a fifth, and that for the State. That is the share which Arab custom has ever admitted as just and right. That fifth will not be spent on me. It will be spent on you and your needs. Remember that one who misappropriates or misuses public money will be humiliated in the sight of God on the Judgement Day."

It has been said by malicious critics that the Prophet longed to become a king and to have a kingdom. But imagine him confronted by a mean crowd, while he is already a king. If he had longed to become a king and to have a kingdom, would he have treated a beggarly mob as he treated this Meccan mob? Would he have agreed to be mobbed at all in the way he was? Would he have argued and explained? It is only Prophets and Messengers of God who can set such an example. All the booty, the money, and the valuable material

that there was to distribute had been distributed among the deserving and the poor. Still there were those who remained unsatisfied, who mobbed the Prophet, protested against the distribution charging the Prophet with injustice.

One Dhul-Khuwaisirah came near the Prophet and said, "Muḥammad, I am a witness to what you are doing." "And what am I doing?" asked the Prophet.

"You are committing an injustice," said he.

"Woe to you," said the Prophet. "If I can be unjust, then there is no one on the face of the earth who can be just" (*Muslim, Kitābuz-Zakāh*).

True believers were full of rage. When this man left the assembly some of them said, "This man deserves death. Will you let us kill him?"

"No," said the Prophet. "If he observes our laws and commits no visible offence, how can we kill him?"

"But," said the believers, "when a person says and does one thing but believes and desires quite another, would he not deserve to be treated accordingly?"

"I cannot deal with people according to what they have in their hearts. God has not charged me with this. I can deal with them according to what they say and do."

The Prophet went on to tell the believers that one day this man and others of his kin would stage a rebellion in Islam. The Prophet's words came true. In the time of 'Alī, the Fourth *Khalīfah* of Islam, this man and his friends led the rebellion against him and became the leaders of a universally condemned division of Islam, the Khawārij.

After dealing with the Hawāzin, the Prophet returned to Medina. It was another great day for its people. One great day was when the Prophet arrived at Medina, a refugee from the ill-treatment of the Meccans. On this great day, the Prophet re-entered Medina, full of joy and aware of his determination and promise to make Medina his home.

### **Machinations of Abū 'Āmir**

We must now turn to the activities of one Abū 'Āmir Madanī. He belonged to the Khazraj tribe. Through long association with Jews and Christians he had acquired the habit of silent meditation and of repeating the names of God. Because of this habit, he was generally known as Abū 'Āmir, the Hermit. He was, however, not a Christian by faith. When the Prophet went to Medina after the Hijrah, Abū 'Āmir escaped from Medina to Mecca. When at last Mecca also submitted to the growing influence of Islam, he began to hatch a new intrigue against Islam. He changed his name and his habitual mode of dress and settled down in Qubā, a village near Medina. As he had been away for a long time and had altered his appearance and his dress, the

people of Medina did not recognize him. Only those hypocrites recognized him with whom he had relations in secret. He took the hypocrites of Medina into his confidence and with their concurrence planned to go to Syria and excite and provoke the Christian rulers and Christian Arabs into attacking Medina. While he was engaged in his sinister mission in the north, he had planned for the spread of disaffection in Medina. His colleagues, the hypocrites, were to spread rumours that Medina was going to be attacked by Syrian forces. As a result of this dual plot Abū ‘Āmir hoped that Muslims and Syrian Christians would go to war. If his plot did not succeed, he hoped that Muslims would themselves be provoked into attacking Syria. Even thus a war might start between Muslims and Syrians and Abū ‘Āmir would have something to rejoice over. Completing his plans, he went to Syria. While he was away the hypocrites at Medina—according to plan—began to spread rumours that caravans had been sighted which were coming to attack Medina. When no caravan appeared, they issued some kind of explanation.

### **The Expedition of Tabūk**

These rumours became so persistent, that the Prophet thought it worthwhile to lead in person a Muslim army against Syria. These were difficult times. Arabia was in the grip of a famine. The harvest in the previous year had been poor and both grain and fruit were in short supply. The time for the new harvest had not yet come. It was the end of September or the beginning of October when the Prophet set out on this mission. The hypocrites knew that the rumours were their own inventions. They knew also that their design was to provoke Muslims into an attack on the Syrians if the Syrians did not attack Muslims. In either case, a conflict with the great Roman Empire was to result in the destruction of Muslims. The lesson of Mu’tah was before them. At Mu’tah Muslims had to face such a huge army that it was with great difficulty that they were able to effect a retreat. The hypocrites were hoping to stage a second Mu’tah in which the Prophet himself might lose his life. While the hypocrites were busy spreading rumours about the Syrian attack on Muslims, they also made every effort to strike fear in the minds of Muslims. The Syrians could raise very large armies which Muslims could not hope to stand against. They urged Muslims not to take part in the conflict with Syria. Their plan was, on the one hand, to provoke Muslims into attacking Syria and, on the other, to discourage them from going in large numbers. They wanted Muslims to go to war against Syria and meet with certain defeat. But as soon as the Prophet announced his intention of leading this new expedition, enthusiasm ran high among Muslims. They went forward with offers of sacrifice for the sake of their faith. Muslims were ill-equipped for a war on such a scale. Their treasury was empty. Only the more prosperous



Muslims had means to pay for the war. Individual Muslims vied with one another in the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of their faith. It is said that when the expedition was under way and the Prophet appealed for funds, 'Uthmān gave away the greater part of his wealth. His contribution is said to have amounted to about one thousand gold dinars, equivalent to about twenty-five thousand rupees. Other Muslims also made contributions according to their capacity. The poor Muslims were also provided with riding animals, swords and lances. Enthusiasm prevailed. There was at Medina at the time a party of Muslims who had migrated from Yemen. They were very poor. Some of them went to the Prophet and offered their services for this expedition. They said, "O Prophet of God, take us with you. We want nothing beyond the means of going." The Quran makes a reference to these Muslims and their offers in the following words:

Nor against those to whom, when they came to thee that thou shouldst mount them, thou didst say, 'I cannot find whereon I can mount you'; they turned back, their eyes overflowing with tears, out of grief that they could not find what they might spend (9:92).

That is to say, they are not to blame who did not take part in the war because they were without means and who applied to the Prophet to provide them with the means of transport to the battlefield. The Prophet was unable to provide the transport, so they left disappointed feeling they were poor, and were unable to contribute to the war between Muslims and Syrians. Abū Mūsā was the leader of this group. When asked what they had asked for, he said, "We did not ask for camels or horses. We only said we did not have shoes and could not cover the long journey barefooted. If we only had shoes, we would have gone on foot and taken part in the war alongside of our Muslim brethren." As this army was going to Syria and Muslims had not yet forgotten what they had suffered at Mu'tah, every Muslim was full of anxiety with regard to the personal safety of the Prophet. The women of Medina played their part. They were busy inducing their husbands and sons to join the war. One Companion who had gone out of Medina returned when the Prophet had already set out with the army. This Companion entered his house and was expecting his wife to greet him with the affection and emotion of a woman who meets her husband after a long time. He found his wife sitting in the courtyard and went forward to embrace and kiss her. But the wife raised her hands and pushed him back. The astonished husband looked at his wife and said, "Is this the treatment for one who comes home after a long time?"

"Are you not ashamed?" said the wife. "The Prophet of God should go on dangerous expeditions, and you should be making love to your wife? Your first duty is to go to the battlefield. We shall see about the rest." It is said the

Companion went out of the house at once, tightened the girths of his mount and galloped after the Prophet. At a distance of about three days' journey he overtook the Muslim army. The disbelievers and the hypocrites had probably thought that the Prophet acting upon rumours, invented and spread by them, would spring upon the Syrian armies without a thought. They forgot that the Prophet was concerned to set an example to generations of followers for all time to come. When the Prophet neared Syria, he stopped and sent his men in different directions to report on the state of affairs. The men returned and reported there were no Syrian concentrations anywhere. The Prophet decided to return, but stayed for a few days during which he signed agreements with some of the tribes on the border. There was no war and no fighting. The journey took the Prophet about two months and a half. When the hypocrites at Medina found that their scheme for inciting war between Muslims and Syrians had failed and that the Prophet was returning safe and sound, they began to fear that their intrigue had been exposed. They were afraid of the punishment which was now their due. But they did not halt their sinister plans. They equipped a party and posted it on the two sides of a narrow pass some distance from Medina. The pass was so narrow that only a single file could go through it. When the Prophet and the Muslim army approached the spot, he had a warning by revelation that the enemy was in ambush on both sides of the narrow pass. The Prophet ordered his Companions to reconnoitre. When they reached the spot they saw men in hiding with the obvious intent to attack. These men, however, fled as soon as they saw this reconnoitring party. The Prophet decided not to pursue them.

When the Prophet reached Medina, the hypocrites who had kept out of this battle began to make lame excuses. But the Prophet accepted them. At the same time he felt that the time had come when their hypocrisy should be exposed. He had a command from God that the mosque at Qubā, which the hypocrites had built in order to be able to hold their meetings in secret, should be demolished. The hypocrites were compelled to say their prayers with other Muslims. No other penalty was proposed.

Returning from Tabūk, the Prophet found that the people of Ṭā'if also had submitted. After this the other tribes of Arabia applied for admission to Islam. In a short time the whole of Arabia was under the flag of Islam.

### **The Last Pilgrimage**

In the ninth year of the Hijrah the Prophet went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. On the day of the pilgrimage, he received the revelation containing the famed verse of the Quran which says:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion (5:4).

This verse said in effect that the Message which the Holy Prophet had brought from God and which by word and deed he had been expounding all these years, had been completed. Every part of this Message was a blessing. The Message now completed embodied the highest blessings which man could receive from God. It is epitomized in the name 'al-Islām', which means submission. Submission was to be the religion of Muslims, the religion of mankind. The Holy Prophet recited this verse in the valley of *Muzdalifah*, where the pilgrims had assembled. Returning from *Muzdalifah*, the Prophet stopped at Minā. It was the eleventh day of the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah. The Prophet stood before a large gathering of Muslims and delivered an address, famed in history as the fare-well address of the Prophet. In the course of this address he said:

O men, lend me an attentive ear. For I know not whether I will stand before you again in this valley and address you as I address you now. Your lives and your possessions have been made immune by God to attacks by one another until the Day of Judgement. God has appointed for everyone a share in the inheritance. No 'will' shall now be admitted which is prejudicial to the interests of a rightful heir. A child born in any house will be regarded as the child of the father in that house. Whoever contests the parentage of this child will be liable to punishment under the Law of Islam. Anyone who attributes his birth to someone else's father, or falsely claims someone to be his master, God, His angels and the whole of mankind will curse him.

O men, you have some rights against your wives, but your wives also have some rights against you. Your right against them is that they should live chaste lives, and not adopt ways which may bring disgrace to the husband in the sight of his people. If your wives do not live up to this, then you have the right to punish them. You can punish them after due inquiry has been made by a competent authority, and your right to punish has been established. Even so, punishment in such a case must not be very severe. But if your wives do no such thing, and their behaviour is not such as would bring disgrace to their husbands, then your duty is to provide for them food and garments and shelter, according to your own standard of living. Remember you must always treat your wives well. God has charged you with the duty of looking after them. Woman is weak and cannot protect her own rights. When you married, God appointed you the trustees of those rights. You brought your wives to your homes under the Law of God. You must not, therefore, insult the trust which God has placed in your hands.

O men, you still have in your possession some prisoners of war. I

advise you, therefore, to feed them and to clothe them in the same way and style as you feed and clothe yourselves. If they do anything wrong which you are unable to forgive, then pass them on to someone else. They are part of God's creation. To give them pain or trouble can never be right.

O men, what I say to you, you must hear and remember. All Muslims are as brethren to one another. All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal.

While he was saying this the Prophet raised his hands and joined the fingers of the one hand with the fingers of the other and then said:

Even as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any right, any superiority to claim over another. You are as brothers.

Proceeding the Prophet said:

Do you know what month this is? What territory we are in? What day of the year it is today?

The Muslims said in reply, they knew it was the sacred month, the sacred land and the day of the *Hajj*.

Then the Prophet said:

Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy, so has God made the lives, property and honour of every man sacred. To take any man's life or his property, or attack his honour, is as unjust and wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory. What I command you today is not meant only for today. It is meant for all time. You are expected to remember it and to act upon it until you leave this world and go to the next to meet your Maker.

In conclusion, he said:

What I have said to you, you should communicate to the ends of the earth. Maybe those who have not heard me may benefit by it more than those who have heard (*Ṣiḥāḥ Sittab, Ṭabarī, Hishām and Khamīs*).

The Prophet's address is an epitome of the entire teaching and spirit of Islam. It shows how deep was the Prophet's concern for the welfare of man and the peace of the world; also how deep was his regard for the rights of women and the weak. The Prophet knew his end was near. He had had hints from God about his death. Among the cares and anxieties to which he gave expression were his care and anxiety about the treatment women received at the hands of men. He took care that he should not pass away from this world

to the next without assuring to women the status which was theirs by right. Since the birth of man, woman had been regarded as the slave and handmaid of man. This was the Prophet's one care. His other care was for prisoners of war. They were wrongly looked on and treated as slaves and were subjected to cruelties and excesses of all kinds. The Prophet felt he should not leave this world without assuring to prisoners of war the rights which were theirs in the sight of God. Inequality between man and man also oppressed the Prophet. Occasionally differences were stressed to a degree which could not be endured. Some men were raised to the skies and others were degraded to the depths. The conditions which made for this inequality were conditions which made for antagonism and war between nation and nation and country and country. The Prophet thought of these difficulties, also. Unless the spirit of inequality was killed and conditions which induced one people to usurp the rights of another and to attack their lives and their possessions—unless these conditions which become rampant at times of moral decay were removed, the peace and progress of the world could not be assured. He taught that human life and human possessions had the same sacredness which belonged to sacred days, sacred months and sacred places. No man ever showed such concern and such care for the welfare of women, the rights of the weak, and for peace between nations as did the Prophet of Islam. No man ever did as much as the Prophet to promote equality among mankind. No man pined as much as he for the good of man. No wonder, Islam has always upheld the right of women to hold and to inherit property. European nations did not conceive of this right until about one thousand three hundred years after the advent of Islam. Every person who enters Islam becomes the equal of everyone else, no matter how low the society from which he comes. Freedom and equality are characteristic contributions of Islam to the culture of the world. The conceptions which other religions hold of freedom and equality are far behind those which Islam has preached and practised. In a Muslim mosque, a king, a religious leader and a common man have the same status; there is no difference between them. In the places of worship of other religions and other nations these differences exist to this day, although those religions and nations claim to have done more than Islam for freedom and equality.

### **The Prophet Gives Hints of His Death**

On the way back, the Prophet again informed his Companions of his approaching death. He said, "O men I am but one like you. I may receive the Call any day and I may have to go. My Kind and Vigilant Master has informed me that a Prophet lives up to half the years of the Prophet before

him.<sup>1</sup> I think I shall soon receive the Call and I shall depart. O my Companions, I shall have to answer God, and you will have to answer also. What will you then say?"

Upon this the Companions said, "We will say that you delivered well the Message of Islam and devoted all your life to the service of the Faith. You had the most perfect passion for the good of man. We will say: Allah, give him the best of rewards."

Then the Prophet asked, "Do you bear witness that God is One, that Muḥammad is His Servant and Prophet, that Heaven and Hell are true, that death is certain, that there is life after death, that the Judgement Day must come, and that all the dead will one day be raised from their graves, restored to life and assembled?"

"Yes," said the Companions. "We bear witness to all these truths."

Turning to God, the Prophet said, "Be Thou also a witness to this—that I have explained Islam to them."

After this Pilgrimage, the Prophet was very busy teaching and training his followers, trying to raise their moral standard and to reform and refine their conduct. His own death became his frequent theme and he prepared the Muslims for it.

One day, rising for an address to the Faithful, he said, "Today I have had the revelation:

When the help of Allah comes, and victory, and thou seest men entering into the religion of Allah in troops, extol thou the glory of thy Lord, with His praise, and seek forgiveness of Him. Verily He is Oft-Returning with compassion (110:2-4).

That is to say, the time was coming when, with the help of God, multitudes were to join the Faith of Islam. It was then to be the duty of the Prophet—and of his followers—to praise God and pray to Him to remove all obstacles in the way of the establishment of the Faith.

The Prophet made use of a parable on this occasion: God said to a man, 'If it please you, you may return to Me, or you may work a little longer at reforming the world.' The man said that he preferred to return to his Lord.

Abū Bakr was among the audience. He had been listening to this last address of the Prophet, with fervour and anxiety—the fervour of a great believer and the anxiety of a friend and follower who could see in this address the portents of the Prophet's death. On hearing the parable Abū Bakr could contain himself no longer. He broke down. The other Companions, who had

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<sup>1</sup> This was not meant as a general law. It referred only to the Holy Prophet. A tradition puts down the age of Jesus at one hundred and twenty or so. As he had already attained to sixty-two or sixty-three, he thought his death must be near.—Ed.

taken a surface view of what they had been listening to, were amazed when Abū Bakr burst into tears. What could be the matter with Abū Bakr? They asked. The Prophet was relating the coming victories of Islam, yet he was weeping. ‘Umar, particularly, felt annoyed at Abū Bakr. The Prophet was giving glad news, yet this old man was crying. But only the Prophet understood what was happening. Only Abū Bakr, he thought, had understood him. Only he had perceived that the verses which promised victories also portended the Prophet’s approaching death.

The Prophet went on to say, "Abū Bakr is very dear to me. If it were permissible to love anyone more than others, I would so have loved Abū Bakr. But that degree of love is only for God. O my people, all the doors which open to the mosque should be closed from today except the door of Abū Bakr."

There was no doubt that this last instruction implied a prophecy that after the Prophet Abū Bakr would be the First *Khalīfah*. To lead the Faithful in prayers he would have to come to the mosque five times a day and, for this, he would have to keep open the door of his house into the mosque. Years afterwards, when ‘Umar was *Khalīfah*, he asked some of those present the meaning of the verse, "When the help of God and victory come." Evidently he remembered the circumstances in which the Prophet taught Muslims this and the verses which follow. He must have remembered also that then only Abū Bakr understood the meaning of these verses. ‘Umar was trying to test Muslims for their knowledge of these verses. They had failed to understand them at the time of their revelation: did they know the meaning now? Ibn ‘Abbās, who must have been ten or eleven years of age at the time of their revelation and who was now seventeen or eighteen, volunteered to answer. He said, "Leader of the Faithful, these verses contained a prophecy about the death of the Holy Prophet. When a Prophet’s work is done, he wishes no longer to live in the world. The verses spoke of the imminent victory of Islam. This victory had a sad side and that was the impending departure of the Prophet from this world." ‘Umar complimented Ibn ‘Abbās and said that when the verses were revealed only Abū Bakr understood their meaning.

### **Last Days of the Prophet**

At last the day drew near which every human being must face. The Prophet’s work was done. All that God had to reveal to him for the benefit of man had been revealed. The spirit of Muḥammad had infused new life into his people. A new nation had arisen, a new outlook on life and new institutions; in short, a new heaven and a new earth. The foundations of a new order had been laid. The land had been ploughed and watered and the seed scattered for a new harvest. And now the harvest itself had begun to show. It was not, however,

for him to reap it. It was for him only to plough, to sow and to water. He came as a labourer, remained a labourer and was now due to depart as a labourer. He found his reward not in the things of this world but in the pleasure and the approval of his God, his Maker and Master. When the time came for reaping the harvest, he preferred to go to Him, leaving others to reap.

The Holy Prophet fell ill. For some days he continued to visit the mosque and lead the prayers. Then he became too weak to do this. The Companions were so used to his daily company that they could hardly believe he would die. But he had been telling them of his death again and again. One day, touching upon this very theme, he said, "If a man make a mistake, it is better he should make amends for it in this very world so that he should have no regrets in the next. Therefore I say, if I have done any wrong to any of you, it may be only unwittingly, let him come forward and ask me to make amends. If even unknowingly I have injured any one of you, let him come forward and take his revenge. I do not wish to be put to shame when I face my God in the next world. The Companions were moved. Tears sprang to their eyes. What pains had he not taken and what sufferings had he not endured for their sake? He put up with hunger and thirst in order that others might have enough to eat and to drink. He mended his own clothes and cobbled his own shoes in order that others might dress well. And yet here he was, eager to right even fancied wrongs he might have done to others; so much did he respect the rights of others.

All the Companions received the Prophet's offer in solemn silence. But one came forward and said, "O Prophet of God, I once received an injury from you. We were lining up for battle when you passed by our line and while passing you dug your elbow in my side. It was all done unwittingly, but you said we could avenge even unintentional wrongs. I want to avenge this wrong." The Companions, who had received the Prophet's offer in solemn silence, were full of wrath. They became enraged at the insolence and stupidity of this man who had failed completely to understand the spirit of the Prophet's offer and the solemnity of the occasion. But the Companion seemed adamant—determined to take the Prophet at his word.

The Prophet said, "You are welcome to take your revenge."

He turned his back to him and said, "Come and hit me as I hit you."

"But," explained this Companion, "when you hit me my side was bare, because I was wearing no shirt at the time."

"Raise my shirt," said the Prophet, "and let him hit my side with his elbow." They did so but, instead of hitting the bare side of the Prophet, this Companion bent forward with bedewed eyes and kissed the Prophet's bare body.

"What is this?" asked the Prophet.



"Didn't you say that your days with us were numbered? How many more occasions can we then have of touching you in the flesh and expressing our love and affection for you? True, you did hit me with your elbow, but who could think of avenging it. I had this idea here and now. You offered to let us take revenge. I said to myself—let me kiss you under cover of revenge."

The Companions full of wrath until then began to wish the thought had occurred to them.

### **The Prophet Passes Away**

But the Prophet was ill and the ailment seemed to advance. Death seemed to draw nearer and nearer, and depression and gloom descended over the hearts of the Companions. The sun shone over Medina as brightly as ever, but to the Companions it seemed paler and paler. The day dawned as before but it seemed to bring darkness, not light. At last came the time when the soul of the Prophet was to depart from its physical frame and meet its Maker. His breathing became more and more difficult. The Prophet, who was spending his last days in 'Ā'ishah's chamber, said to her, "Raise my head a little and bring it near to your side. I cannot breathe well." 'Ā'ishah did so. She sat up and held his head. The death pangs were visible. Greatly agitated, the Prophet looked now to this side and now to that. Again and again he said, "Woe to the Jews and the Christians. They encouraged the worship of the graves of their Prophets." This, we might say, was his dying message for his followers. While he lay on his death-bed, he seemed to say to his followers, "You will learn to hold me above all other Prophets, and more successful than any of them. But take care, do not turn my grave into an object of worship. Let my grave remain only a grave. Others may worship the graves of their Prophets and turn them into centres of pilgrimage, places where they may repair and perform austerities, make their offerings, and do their thanksgiving. Others may do this, but not you. You must remember your one and only objective—that is, the worship of the One and Only God."

After he had thus warned Muslims about their duty to guard the hard-won idea of One God and the distinction between God and Man, his eyelids began to droop. His eyes began to close. All he then said was, "To my Friend the Highest of the High—to my Friend the Highest of the High," meaning evidently that he was heading towards God. As he said this he gave up the ghost.

The news reached the mosque. There many Companions had assembled, having given up their private tasks. They were expecting to hear better news but instead heard of the Prophet's death. It came like a bolt from the blue. Abū Bakr was out. 'Umar was in the mosque, but he was utterly stupefied with grief. It angered him if he heard anyone say the Prophet was dead. He even

drew his sword and threatened to kill those who should say the Prophet had died. There was much the Prophet had yet to do, so the Prophet could not die. True, his soul had departed from his body, but it had gone only to meet its Maker. Just as Moses had gone for a time to meet his Maker only to return, the Prophet must return to do what had been left undone. There were the hypocrites, for instance, with whom they had yet to deal. ‘Umar walked about sword in hand almost as a mad man. As he walked he said: "Whosoever says the Prophet has died will himself die at ‘Umar’s hands." The Companions felt braced and they half-believed what ‘Umar said. The Prophet could not die. There must have been a mistake. In the meantime some Companions went in search of Abū Bakr, found him and told him what had happened. Abū Bakr made straight for the mosque at Medina and speaking not a word to anyone, entered ‘Ā’ishah’s room and asked her, "Has the Prophet died?"

"Yes", replied ‘Ā’ishah. Then he went straight to where the Prophet’s body was lying, uncovered the face, bent down and kissed the forehead. Tears laden with love and grief fell from his eyes and he said, "God is our witness. Death will not come upon you twice over."

It was a sentence full of meaning. It was Abū Bakr’s reply to what ‘Umar had been saying out of his mad grief. The Prophet had died once. That was his physical death—the death everyone must die. But he was not to have a second death. There was to be no spiritual death—no death to the beliefs which he had established in his followers and for the establishment of which he had taken such pains. One of those beliefs—one of the more important beliefs—he had taught was that even Prophets were human and even they must die. Muslims were not going to forget this so soon after the Prophet’s own death. Having said this great sentence over the dead body of the Prophet, Abū Bakr came out and, piercing through the lines of the Faithful, advanced silently to the pulpit. As he stood, ‘Umar stood by him, his sword drawn as before, determined that if Abū Bakr said the Prophet had died Abū Bakr must lose his head. As Abū Bakr started to speak, ‘Umar pulled at his shirt, wanting to stop him from speaking but Abū Bakr snatched back his shirt and refused to stop.

He then recited the verse of the Quran:

And Muḥammad is only a Messenger. Verily, all Messengers have passed away before him. If then he die or be slain, will you turn back on your heels? (3:145)

That is to say, Muḥammad was a man with a Message from God. There had been other men with Messages from God, and all of them had died. If Muḥammad should die, would they turn back upon everything which they had been taught and which they had learnt? This verse was revealed at the time of

Uḥud. Rumour had then gone round that the Prophet had been killed by the enemy. Many Muslims lost heart and withdrew from the battle. The verse came from heaven to brace them. It had the same effect on this occasion. Having recited the verse, Abū Bakr added to it a word of his own. He said, "Those amongst you who worship God, let them know that God is still alive, and will ever remain alive. But those amongst you who worshipped Muḥammad, let them know it from me that Muḥammad is dead." The Companions recovered their balance on hearing this timely speech. 'Umar himself was changed when he heard Abū Bakr recite the verse quoted above. He began to return to his senses, and to recover his lost judgement. By the time Abū Bakr had finished the recitation of the verse 'Umar's spiritual eye was fully opened. He understood that the Prophet had really died. But no sooner had he realized it, than his legs began to tremble and give way. He fell down exhausted. The man who wanted to terrorize Abū Bakr with his bare sword had been converted by Abū Bakr's speech. The Companions felt the verse had been revealed for the first time on that day, so strong and so new was its appeal. In a paroxysm of grief, they forgot that the verse was in the Quran.

Many expressed the grief which overtook Muslims on the death of the Prophet, but the pithy and profound expression which Ḥassān, the poet of early Islam, gave to it in his couplet remains to this day the best and the most enduring. He said: 'Thou wast the pupil of my eye. Now that thou hast died my eye hath become blind. I care not who dies now. For I feared only thy death.'

This couplet voiced the feeling of every Muslim. For months in the streets of Medina, men, women and children went about reciting this couplet of Ḥassān bin Thābit.

## THE PROPHET'S PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

Having briefly described the outstanding events in the life of the Holy Prophet we would now attempt a short sketch of his character. In this connection we have available the collective testimony of his own people which they bore to his character before he claimed to be a Prophet. At that stage he was known among his people as "The Trustworthy" and "The Truthful" (*Hishām*). There are living at all times large numbers of people against whom no charge of dishonesty is preferred. There are also large numbers who are never exposed to a severe trial or temptation and in the ordinary affairs and concerns of life they behave with honesty and integrity, yet they are not regarded as worthy of any special distinction on that account. Special distinctions are conferred only when the life of a person illustrates in a conspicuous degree some high moral quality. Every soldier that goes into battle puts his life in jeopardy but not every such British soldier has been regarded as worthy of the award of the Victoria Cross, nor every such German soldier of the Iron Cross. There are hundreds of thousands of people in France who occupy themselves with intellectual pursuits but not every one of them is decorated with the Legion of Honour. The mere fact, therefore, that a man is trustworthy and true does not indicate that he possesses eminence in these respects, but when a whole people combines to confer upon an individual the titles of "The Trustworthy" and "The Truthful", that is evidence of the possession of exceptional qualities. Had it been the practice of the people of Mecca to confer such a distinction upon some individual in each generation, even then the recipient would have been looked upon as occupying a high position. But the history of Mecca and of Arabia furnishes no indication that it was customary for the Arabs to confer these or similar titles upon eminent individuals in each generation. On the contrary, through centuries of Arab history we find that it was only in the case of the Holy Prophet of Islam that his people conferred the titles of "The Trustworthy" and "The Truthful". This is proof of the fact that the Holy Prophet possessed these qualities in so eminent a degree that within the knowledge and the memory of his people, no other individual could be regarded as his equal in these respects. The Arabs were well known for their keenness of mind and what they chose to regard as rare must in truth have been rare and unique.

When the Holy Prophet was summoned by God to assume the burden and responsibilities of prophethood, his wife, Khadījah, testified to his high moral qualities—an incident which has been related in the biographical portion of this General Introduction. We shall now proceed to illustrate some of his high

moral qualities so that the reader may be able to appreciate even those aspects of his character which are not generally well known.

### **The Prophet's Purity of Mind and Cleanliness of Body**

It is related of the Holy Prophet that his speech was always pure and that he was (unlike most of his contemporaries) not given to the use of oaths (*Tirmidhī*). This was something exceptional for an Arab. We do not imply that the Arabs at the time of the Holy Prophet habitually indulged in foul language, but there is no doubt that they were in the habit of punctuating their speech with a generous measure of oaths, a habit that persists among them even to this day. The Holy Prophet, however, held the name of God in such reverence that he never uttered it without full justification.

He was very particular, even punctilious, with regard to physical cleanliness. He used to brush his teeth several times a day and was so keen on the practice that he used to say that were he not afraid that the ordinance might prove onerous, he would make it obligatory upon every Muslim to brush his teeth before every one of the five daily prayers. He always washed his hands before and after each meal and, after eating anything that had been cooked, he always rinsed his mouth and considered it desirable that every person who had eaten anything cooked should rinse his mouth before joining in any of the prayers (*Bukhārī*).

In the polity of Islam a mosque is the only place of gathering prescribed for the Muslims. The Holy Prophet, therefore, laid particular stress upon the cleanliness of mosques, especially on occasions when people were expected to collect in them. He had directed that on such occasions incense should be burnt in the mosques to purify the air (*Abū Dāwūd*). He also gave directions that nobody should go to a mosque on the occasion of a congregation or gathering after eating anything that was likely to exhale an offensive odour (*Bukhārī*).

He insisted upon streets being kept clean and clear of twigs, stones, and all articles or matter which was likely either to obstruct or to prove offensive. Whenever he himself found any such matter or article lying in a street he would remove it, and he used to say that a person who helps to keep streets and roads clean and clear, earns spiritual merit in the sight of God. He is also reported to have enjoined that public thoroughfares should not be so used as to cause obstruction nor should any unclean or undesirable matter or article be thrown on to a public street, nor should a street be defiled in any other way, as all such acts are displeasing to God. He was very keen that all supply of water conserved for human use should be kept clean and pure. For instance, he prohibited anything being thrown into standing water which might befoul it

and any reservoir of water being used in a manner which would render it impure (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim, Kitābul-Birri Waṣ-Ṣilah*).

### **The Prophet's Simple Life**

The Prophet was extremely simple in the matter of food and drink. He never expressed displeasure with ill-prepared or ill-cooked food. If he could eat such food he would do so to save the person who had prepared it from disappointment. If, however, a dish was uneatable, he merely refrained from partaking of it and never expressed his disapproval of it. When he sat down to a meal he paid attention to the food placed before him and used to say that he did not like an attitude of indifference towards food as if the person eating was above paying attention to mere matters of food and drink. When any eatable was presented to him he always shared it with those present. On one occasion somebody presented him with some dates. He looked round and after making an estimate of the number of people present divided the dates equally among them, each of them receiving seven. Abū Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet never ate his fill even of barley bread (*Bukhārī*).

On one occasion while he was passing along a road he noticed some people gathered round a roast kid ready to enjoy the feast. When they saw the Holy Prophet they invited him to join them, but he declined. This was not due to his not having a liking for roast meat but to the fact that he did not approve of people indulging in a feast in the open where they could be observed by poor people who had themselves not enough to eat. It is related of him that on other occasions he did partake of roast meat. ‘Ā’ishah has related that the Holy Prophet did not, till the day of his death, on any occasion, eat his fill on three consecutive days. He was very particular that a person should not go to a meal in another person's house uninvited. On one occasion somebody invited him to a meal and requested that he might bring four other persons with him. When he arrived at the house of his host he found that a sixth person had also joined his party. The host came to the door to receive him and his party and the Holy Prophet drew his attention to the fact that there were now six of them and that it was for the host to decide whether he would permit the sixth person to join them in the meal or whether the latter should depart. The host, of course, readily invited the sixth person also (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Aṭ’ima*).

Whenever the Holy Prophet sat down to a meal he always began to eat by invoking the name and blessings of Allah, and as soon as he concluded he rendered thanks in these words: "All praise is due to Allah, Who has given us to eat: Praise, abundant and sincere and ever-increasing: Praise, which does not leave an impression upon one's mind that one has rendered enough praise but which creates in one's mind the feeling that enough has not been said and the praise which ought never to be terminated and which makes one think that

every Divine act is worthy of praise and should be praised. Oh Allah! do Thou fill our hearts with these sentiments." Sometimes he used these words: "All praise is due to God Who has satisfied our hunger and thirst. May our hearts ever yearn after His praise and never be ungrateful to Him." He always admonished his Companions to stop before they had eaten their fill and used to say that one man's food should always suffice for two. Whenever any special food was prepared in his house he used to suggest that a portion of it should be sent as a present to his neighbours; and presents of food and other articles used constantly to be sent from his house to his neighbours' houses (*Muslim and Bukhārī, Kitābul-Adab*).

He always tried to ascertain from the faces of those who were in his company whether any of them was in need of sustenance. Abū Hurairah relates the following incident: On one occasion he had been without food for over three days. He stood at the entrance to the mosque and observed Abū Bakr passing near. He asked Abū Bakr the meaning of a verse of the Quran which enjoins the feeding of the poor. Abū Bakr explained its meaning and passed on. Abū Hurairah when relating this incident used to say with indignation that he too understood the Quran as well as Abū Bakr did. His object in asking the latter to explain the meaning of the verse had been that Abū Bakr might guess that he was hungry and might arrange to get food for him. Shortly after, 'Umar passed by and Abū Hurairah asked him also to explain the meaning of the verse. 'Umar also explained its meaning and passed on. Abū Hurairah, like all Companions of the Holy Prophet, was loath to make a direct request and when he perceived that his indirect attempts to draw attention to his condition had failed, he began to feel very faint. Thereupon he heard his name being called in a very soft and tender voice. Looking to the side from which the voice came he saw that the Holy Prophet was looking out from the window of his house and was smiling. He inquired of Abū Hurairah: "Are you hungry?" to which Abū Hurairah replied: "Verily, O Messenger of Allah! I am hungry."

The Holy Prophet said: "There is no food in our house either, but somebody has just sent us a cup of milk. Go to the mosque and see whether there are any other persons there who may be hungry like you." Abū Hurairah goes on to relate: "I thought to myself, I am hungry enough to consume the whole of the milk in the cup, yet the Prophet has asked me to invite any other persons that may be in a similar situation, which means that I shall get very little of the milk. But I had to carry out the Prophet's orders, so I went into the mosque and found six persons sitting there whom I brought with me to the Prophet's door. He gave the cup of milk into the hands of one of them and asked him to drink. When he had finished and put away the cup from his

mouth the Prophet insisted upon his drinking a second time and a third time till he had had his fill. In the same way he insisted upon every one of the six drinking his fill of the milk. Each time he asked anyone to drink I was afraid that little would be left for me. After all the six had drunk of the milk the Prophet gave the cup to me and I saw that there was still plenty of milk in it. In my case also he insisted that I should drink my fill and made me drink a second and a third time and at the end he drank what was left in the cup himself and rendered thanks to God and shut the door" (*Bukhārī, Kitābur-Riqāq*). The Holy Prophet's object in offering the milk to Abū Hurairah last of all may have been to indicate to him that he should have continued to endure the pangs of hunger, trusting in God, and should not have drawn attention to his condition even indirectly.

He always ate and drank with his right hand and always stopped three times to take breath in the middle of a drink. One reason for this may be that if a person who is thirsty drinks water at one stretch he is apt to drink too much and thus upset his digestion. In the matter of eating the rule that he followed was that he partook of all things that are pure and permissible but not in a manner which would savour of indulgence or would deprive other people of their due share. As has been stated, his normal food was always very simple but if anybody presented him with something specially prepared he did not decline it. He did not, however, hanker after good food, though he had a particular liking for honey and for dates. As regards dates, he used to say that there was a special relationship between a Muslim and the date tree whose leaves and bark and fruit, both ripe and unripe, and even the stones of whose fruit could all be put to some use or the other and no part of which was without usefulness. The same was the case with a true Muslim. No act of his was without its beneficence and all that he did promoted the welfare of mankind (*Bukhārī and Muslim*).

The Holy Prophet preferred simplicity in dress. His own dress normally consisted of a shirt and an *izār*<sup>†</sup> or a shirt and a pair of trousers. He always wore his *izār* or his trousers so that the garment covered his body up to a point above his ankles. He did not approve of the knee or any portion of the body above the knee being exposed without extreme necessity. He did not approve of the use, whether as part of dress or in the way of curtains, etc., of cloth which had figures embroidered or painted on it, especially if the figures were large and might be interpreted as representing gods or goddesses or other objects of worship. On one occasion he found a curtain hanging in his house bearing large figures and he directed it to be removed. He, however, saw no harm in the use of cloth bearing small figures which could not be so

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<sup>†</sup> A piece of cloth wrapped around the waist and hanging to the ankles—Ed.



interpreted. He never wore silk himself and did not consider it permissible for Muslim men to wear it. For the purpose of authenticating the letters that he wrote to certain sovereigns inviting them to accept Islam he caused to be prepared a signet-ring, but directed that it should be made of silver and not of gold, for he said that the wearing of gold had been prohibited to Muslim men (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim*). Muslim women are permitted to wear silk and gold but in their case also the Holy Prophet's direction was that excess should be avoided. On one occasion he called for subscriptions for the relief of the poor and a lady took off one of her bracelets and placed it before him as her contribution. Addressing her, he said: "Does not your other hand deserve to be saved from the Fire?" The lady thereupon removed her bracelet from the other hand also and offered it for the purpose that he had in view. None of his wives possessed ornaments of any considerable value and other Muslim women also very seldom possessed any ornaments. In accordance with the teachings of the Quran he deprecated the hoarding of money or bullion, as he held that this was harmful to the interests of the poorer sections of the community and resulted in upsetting the economy of a community and was thus a sin.

‘Umar suggested to the Holy Prophet on one occasion that as he had to receive Embassies from great monarchs, he should have a rich cloak prepared for himself which he could wear on such ceremonial occasions. The Prophet did not approve of the suggestion and said: "It would not be pleasing to God for me to adopt ways like this. I shall meet everybody in the clothes that I normally wear." On one occasion silk garments were presented to him and of these he sent one to ‘Umar. Upon this ‘Umar said, "How can I wear it when you have yourself disapproved of wearing silk garments." The Holy Prophet observed: "Every present is not meant for personal use." His meaning was that since the garment was of silk ‘Umar should have presented it to his wife or to his daughter or should have put it to some other use (*Bukhārī*, *Kitābul-Libās*).

The Prophet's bed was also very simple. He never used a bedstead or a couch but always slept on the ground, the bedding consisting of a piece of leather or of a piece of camelhair cloth. ‘Ā’ishah relates: "Our bedding was so small that when the Holy Prophet used to get up at night for prayers I used to lie on one side of the bedding and stretched out my legs while he was in the standing posture and folded them back when he had to prostrate himself (*Bukhārī*, *Muslim* and *Tirmidhī*).

He adopted the same simplicity with regard to his residential arrangements. His house consisted normally of one room and a small courtyard. A rope used to be strung half way across the room so that when he had visitors a piece of cloth could be hung from the rope to convert a part of the room into an audience chamber separated from the portion occupied by his wife. His life was so simple that ‘Ā’ishah related that during the lifetime of

the Prophet they often had to sustain themselves on dates and water and that on the day of his death there was no food in the house except a few dates (*Bukhārī*).

### **Relationship With God**

Every aspect of the Holy Prophet's life appears to have been governed and coloured by his love for and devotion to God.

In spite of the very heavy responsibilities that had been laid upon his shoulders, the greater portion of his time during the day as well as during the night was spent in the worship and praise of God. He would leave his bed at midnight and devote himself to the worship of God till it was time to go to the mosque for the morning prayers. He sometimes stood so long in prayer during the latter part of the night that his feet would get swollen, and those who saw him in that condition were always much affected. On one occasion 'Ā'ishah said to him: "God has honoured you with His love and nearness. Why then do you subject yourself to so much discomfort and inconvenience?" He replied: "If God has by His Grace and Mercy conferred His love and nearness upon me, is it not my duty in return to be always rendering thanks to Him? Gratitude should increase in proportion to the favours received" (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Kusūf*).

He never entered upon any undertaking without divine command or permission. It has already been related in the biographical portion that, in spite of the very severe persecution to which he was subjected by the people of Mecca, he did not leave the town till he received the divine command to do so. When persecution became very severe and he gave permission to his Companions to migrate to Abyssinia, some of them expressed a desire that he should accompany them. He declined to do so on the ground that he had not received divine permission to that effect. Thus, during a period of hardships and persecution when people usually like to keep their friends and relations close to themselves, he directed his Companions to seek refuge in Abyssinia and himself stayed behind in Mecca, for God had not yet directed him to leave it.

Whenever he heard the word of God being recited, he was overcome by emotion and tears would start from his eyes, especially if he was listening to verses which emphasized his own responsibilities. 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd relates that he was on one occasion asked by the Holy Prophet to recite some verses of the Quran to him. He said: "O Messenger of Allah! The Quran has been revealed to you (i.e. you know it best of all). How then shall I recite it to you?" But the Holy Prophet said: "I love to hear it recited by other people also."

Thereupon 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd began to recite from Sūrah An-Nisā'. When he recited the verse: "And how will it fare with them when We shall bring a witness from every people, and shall bring thee as a witness against

them" (4:42), the Holy Prophet exclaimed: 'Enough! Enough!' 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd looked up and saw that tears were streaming from the Holy Prophet's eyes (*Bukhārī, Kitāb Faḍā'ilul-Qur'ān*).

He was so particular about joining the congregational prayers that, even during severe illness when it is permissible not only to say one's prayers in one's room but even to say them lying in bed, he would go to the mosque to lead the prayers himself. On one occasion when he was unable to proceed to the mosque he directed that Abū Bakr should lead the prayers. Presently however, he felt some improvement in his condition and asked to be supported into the mosque. He rested his weight on the shoulders of two men but was in so feeble a condition that, according to 'Ā'ishah, his feet trailed along the ground (*Bukhārī*).

It is a common practice to give expression to one's pleasure or to draw attention to any particular matter by the clapping of hands and the Arabs used to follow the same practice. The Holy Prophet, however, so loved the remembrance of God that for these purposes he also substituted the praise and remembrance of God in place of the clapping of hands. On one occasion while he was occupied with some important matter, the time of the next prayer service drew near and he directed that Abū Bakr should lead the prayers. Shortly thereafter he was able to conclude the business upon which he was engaged and proceeded at once to the mosque. Abū Bakr was leading the prayers but when the congregation perceived that the Holy Prophet had arrived, they began to clap their hands for the purpose both of giving expression to their joy at his arrival and also to draw Abū Bakr's attention to the fact that the Prophet himself had arrived. Thereupon Abū Bakr stepped back and made room for the Holy Prophet to lead the prayers. When the prayers were over, the Prophet addressed Abū Bakr and said: "Why did you step back after I had directed you to lead the prayers?" Abū Bakr replied: "O Messenger of Allah! How would it befit the son of Abū Quḥāfah to lead the prayers in the presence of the Messenger of Allah?" Then addressing the congregation the Prophet said: "Why did you clap your hands? It is not seemly that while you are engaged in the remembrance of God you should clap your hands. If it should so happen that during the course of prayers attention has to be drawn to some matter, instead of clapping your hands you should utter the name of God aloud. This would draw attention to whatever may have to be taken note of" (*Bukhārī*).

The Prophet did not approve of prayers or worship being carried on as a penance or imposition. On one occasion he came home and observed a rope dangling between two pillars. He inquired what its purpose was, and was informed that his wife Zainab was in the habit of supporting herself by means

of the rope when she became tired in the course of her prayers. He directed the rope to be removed and said that prayers should be continued only so long as one felt easy and cheerful and that if a person became tired he should sit down. Prayers were not an imposition, and if carried on after the body became fatigued they failed of their purpose (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Kusūf*).

He abhorred every action and practice which savoured even remotely of idolatry. When his end was approaching and he was in the grip of the agony of death, he turned from side to side exclaiming: "May the curse of God descend upon those Jews and Christians who have converted the graves of their Prophets into places of worship" (*Bukhārī*). He had in mind those Jews and Christians who prostrated themselves at the graves of their Prophets and saints and addressed their prayers to them, and he meant that if Muslims fell into similar practices they would not be deserving of his prayers but would, on the contrary, cut themselves asunder from him.

His extreme sense of jealousy for the honour of God has already been referred to in the biographical portion. The people of Mecca sought to place all sorts of temptations in his way to persuade him to give up his opposition to idol-worship (*Ṭabarī*). His uncle Abū Ṭālib also tried to dissuade him and expressed his fear that if he persisted in his denunciation of idol-worship, Abū Ṭālib would have to choose between ceasing to give him his protection and the bitter opposition of his people. The only reply that the Prophet made to his uncle on that occasion was: "If these people were to place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left, I would not desist from proclaiming and preaching the Unity of God" (*Zurqānī*). Again, during the Battle of Uḥud when a remnant of wounded Muslims were grouped round him at the foot of a hill and their enemies were giving vent to their feeling of jubilation at having broken the Muslim ranks in shouts of victory and their leader Abū Sufyān called out: "May Hubal (one of the idols worshipped by the Meccans) be exalted! May Hubal be exalted!" the Holy Prophet, in spite of realizing that his own safety and that of the small band of Muslims, who were gathered round him, lay in keeping silent, could restrain himself no longer and directed his Companions to shout in reply, "To Allah alone belongs victory and glory! To Allah alone belongs victory and glory!" (*Bukhārī*).

It was a common misconception among the followers of different religions before the advent of Islam that heavenly and terrestrial manifestations took place to mark occasions of joy and sorrow for Prophets, saints and other great men and that even the movements of the heavenly bodies could be controlled by them. For instance, it is related of some of them that they caused the sun to become stationary in its course or stopped the progress of the moon or caused running water to become still. Islam taught that such notions were baseless and that references to phenomena of this kind

in religious scriptures were only by way of metaphor which, instead of being interpreted in accordance with its correct significance, had given rise to superstitions. Nevertheless, some among Muslims were prone to attribute these phenomena to events in the lives of the great Prophets. In the closing years of the Holy Prophet's life his son Ibrāhim died at the age of two and a half years. An eclipse of the sun occurred on the same day. Some Muslims in Medina gave currency to the idea that the sun had been darkened on the occasion of the death of the Prophet's son as a mark of divine condolence. When this was mentioned to the Holy Prophet he expressed great displeasure and severely condemned the notion. He explained that the sun and the moon and other heavenly bodies were all governed by divine laws and that their movements and the phenomena connected with them had no relation to the life or death of any person (*Bukhārī*).

Arabia is a very dry country and rain is always welcome and is eagerly waited for. The Arabs used to imagine that the coming of rain was controlled by the movements of stars. Whenever anybody gave expression to that idea, the Holy Prophet used to be very upset and admonished his people not to attribute favours bestowed upon them by Providence to other sources. He explained that rain and other natural phenomena were all governed by divine laws and that they were not controlled by the pleasure or displeasure of any god or goddess or of any other power (*Muslim, Kitābul-Īmān*).

He had perfect trust in God which no combination of adverse circumstances could shake. On one occasion an enemy of his, finding him asleep and unguarded, stood over his head with drawn sword and threatened to despatch him at once. Before doing so he asked: "Who can rescue you from this predicament?" The Holy Prophet calmly replied: "Allah." He uttered this word with such perfect assurance that even the heart of his disbelieving enemy was forced to acknowledge the loftiness of his faith and trust in God. The sword fell from his hand, and he, who a moment before was bent upon his destruction, stood before him like a convicted criminal awaiting sentence (*Muslim, Kitābul-Faḍā'il* and *Bukhārī, Kitābul-Jihād*).

At the other end of the scale was his sense of perfect humility vis-a-vis the Divine. Abū Hurairah relates: "One day I heard the Holy Prophet say that no man would attain salvation through his own good deeds. Thereupon I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! 'Surely you will enter Paradise through your own good actions,' to which he replied: 'No, I too cannot enter Paradise through my own actions save only that God's Grace and Mercy should envelop me' " (*Bukhārī, Kitābur-Riqāq*).

He always exhorted people to choose and follow the right path and to be diligent in their search for means whereby they could attain nearness to God. He taught that no man should desire death for himself, for if he is good he

will, by living longer, be able to achieve greater good; and if he is evil, he may, if given time, be able to repent of his evil ways and start on a good way. His love for, and devotion to, God found expression in many ways. For instance, whenever after a dry season the first rain drops began to descend, he would put out his tongue to catch a raindrop and would exclaim: "Here is the latest favour from my Lord." He was constantly occupied in praying for God's forgiveness and beneficence, more particularly when he was sitting among people so that those who were in his company or were connected with him and Muslims generally should save themselves from divine wrath and should become deserving of divine forgiveness. The consciousness that he was always in the presence of God never deserted him. When he used to lie down to sleep, he would say: "O Allah! let me die (go to sleep) with Thy name on my lips and with Thy name on my lips let me rise." When he woke up, he would say: "All praise is due to God who has brought me to life after death (sleep) and one day we shall all be gathered unto Him" (*Bukhārī*).

He constantly yearned for nearness to God and one of his oft-repeated prayers was "O Allah! Do Thou fill my heart with Thy light and fill my eyes with Thy light and fill my ears with Thy light and put Thy light on my right and put Thy light on my left and put Thy light above me and put Thy light below me and put Thy light in front of me and put Thy light behind me and do Thou, O Allah, convert the whole of me into light" (*Bukhārī*).

Ibn 'Abbās relates: "Shortly before the Holy Prophet's death, Musailimah (the false prophet) came to Medina and proclaimed that if Muḥammad would appoint him his successor he would be prepared to accept him. Musailimah was accompanied by a very large retinue and the tribe with which he was connected was the largest among the tribes of Arabia. When the Holy Prophet was informed of his advent he went to meet him, accompanied by Thābit bin Qais bin Shams. He had in his hand a dried palm twig. When he arrived at Musailimah's camp he went and stood in front of him. In the meantime some more of his Companions had come up and ranged themselves round him. Addressing Musailimah he said, "It has been conveyed to me that you have said that if I were to appoint you my successor you would be ready to follow me, but I am not willing to bestow even this dried palm twig upon you contrary to God's commands. Your end will be as God has appointed. If you turn your back on me God will bring you to naught. I perceive very clearly that God will deal out to you what He has revealed to me." He then added: "I will now retire. If you have anything further to say, you may talk to Thābit bin Qais bin Shams, who will act as my representative." He then returned. Abū Hurairah was also with him. Somebody inquired of the Prophet what he meant by saying that God would deal out to Musailimah what had been revealed to him. The Holy Prophet replied: "I saw in a dream two bracelets around my

wrists which I disliked. While still in my dream I was directed by God to blow upon the bracelets. When I blew upon them, both of them disappeared. I interpreted this to mean that two false claimants (to prophethood) would appear after me" (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Maghāzī*). This incident occurred towards the end of the Holy Prophet's life. The last and the largest of the Arab tribes who had not yet accepted him was prepared to make its submission and the only condition put forward by it was that the Holy Prophet should appoint its chief as his successor. Had the Prophet been actuated even remotely by any personal motives, nothing stood in the way of his securing the unity of the whole of Arabia by promising his succession to the chief of the largest tribe of Arabia. The Holy Prophet had no son of his own and no dynastic ambition could have stood in the way of such an arrangement, but he never regarded even the smallest thing as belonging to him and as being at his absolute disposal. He could, therefore, not deal with the leadership of Muslims as if it were in his gift. He regarded it as a sacred divine trust and believed that God would bestow it upon whomsoever He thought fit. He therefore rejected Musailimah's offer with contempt, and told him that, let alone the leadership of Muslims, he was not prepared to bestow upon him even a dry palm twig.

Whenever he referred to or discoursed about God, it appeared to onlookers as if his whole being was in the grip of a passion of love for and devotion to God.

He always insisted upon simplicity in Divine worship. The mosque, that he built in Medina and in which he always led prayers, had only a mud floor which was innocent of all covering or matting and the roof, which was made of dried palm branches and leaves, leaked whenever it rained. On such occasions the Holy Prophet and members of the congregation would be drenched with rain and mud but he would continue with the prayers till the end and on no occasion did he give any indication that he would postpone the service or remove to more weather-tight shelter (*Bukhārī, Kitābus-Ṣaum*).

He was also watchful regarding his Companions. 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar was a man of extreme piety and purity of life. Concerning him the Holy Prophet once said: "'Abdullāh bin 'Umar would be an even better man if he were to be more regular with regard to his *Tahajjud* prayers."<sup>‡</sup> When this was communicated to 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar he never thereafter missed these prayers. It is recorded that the Holy Prophet, happening to be in the house of his daughter Fāṭimah, inquired of her and his son-in-law, 'Alī, whether they were regular with regard to their *Tahajjud* prayers. 'Alī replied: "O Messenger of Allah! We try to get up for *Tahajjud* prayers but on occasion when God so

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<sup>‡</sup> This is a voluntary prayer which is said in the latter part of the night and is not one of the five daily prayers.—Ed.

wills that we are unable to wake up in time we miss them." He went back and, on the way, repeated several times a verse of the Quran which means that a man is often reluctant to admit his fault and tries to cover it up with excuses (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Kusūf*). The Prophet meant that ‘Alī should not have attributed his default to God by saying that when God willed that they should not wake up they were unable to wake up in time, but should have admitted his own weakness in the matter.

### **Disapproval of Penance**

The Holy Prophet, however, strongly disapproved of formality in the matter of worship and condemned the imposition of any penance upon oneself as a form of worship. He taught that true worship consists in the beneficent use of the faculties with which God has endowed man. God having bestowed eyes upon man to see with, it would not be worship but impertinence to keep them shut or to have them removed. It is not the proper use of the faculty of sight which can be regarded as sinful, it is the improper use of the faculty that would be a sin. It would be ingratitude on the part of a man to have himself deprived of the faculty of hearing, though it would be sinful of him to use that faculty for the purpose of listening to slander and backbiting. Abstention from food (except on occasions when it is prescribed or is otherwise desirable) may amount to suicide and thus constitute an unforgivable sin, though it would also be sinful on the part of a man to devote himself entirely to food and drink or to indulge in the eating or drinking of prohibited or undesirable articles. This is a golden principle which was taught and emphasized by the Holy Prophet of Islam and which had not been inculcated by any previous Prophet.

The correct use of natural faculties constitutes high moral qualities; the frustration or stultification of those qualities is folly. It is their improper use that is evil or sinful. Their proper use is true virtue. This is the essence of the moral teachings inculcated by the Holy Prophet of Islam. And this, in brief, was also a picture of his own life and actions. ‘Ā’ishah relates: "Whenever the Holy Prophet had a choice of two courses of action he always chose the easier of the two, provided it was free from all suspicion of error or sin. Where a course of action was open to such suspicion, the Holy Prophet of all men gave it the widest berth" (*Muslim, Kitābul-Faḍā’il*). This is indeed the highest and the most admirable course open to man. Many men voluntarily court pain and privations, not for the purpose of winning God’s pleasure, for God’s pleasure is not to be won by inflicting purposeless pain and privations upon oneself, but with the object of deceiving mankind. Such people possess little inherent virtue and wish to cover up their faults and to acquire merit in the eyes of others by assuming false virtues. The object of the Holy Prophet of Islam, however, was to attain to real virtue and to win the pleasure of God. He was,



therefore, completely free from pretence and make-believe. That the world should regard him as bad or should appraise him as good was a matter of complete indifference to him. All that mattered to him was how he found himself and how God would judge him. If in addition to the testimony of his conscience and the approval of God he also won the true testimony of mankind he was grateful, but if men looked upon him with jaundiced eyes he was sorry for them and attached no value to their opinion.

### **Attitude Towards his Wives**

He was extremely kind and fair towards his wives. If on occasion any one of them failed to comport herself with due deference towards him he merely smiled and passed the matter over. He said to ‘Ā’ishah one day: "‘Ā’ishah, whenever you are upset with me I always get to know it." ‘Ā’ishah enquired: "How is that?" He said: "I have noticed that when you are pleased with me and in the course of conversation you have to refer to God, you refer to Him as the Lord of Muḥammad. But if you are not pleased with me, you refer to Him as the Lord of Ibrāhīm." At this ‘Ā’ishah laughed and said he was right (*Bukhārī, Kitābun-Nikāḥ*). Khadījah was his first wife and had made great sacrifices in his cause. She was much older than the Prophet. After her death he married younger women but never permitted the memory of Khadījah to become dim. Whenever any of Khadījah’s friends visited him he would stand up to receive her (*Muslim*). If he chanced to see any article that had belonged to or had been connected with Khadījah, he was always overcome by emotion. Among the prisoners taken by the Muslims in the Battle of Badr was a son-in-law of the Prophet. He possessed nothing which he could offer as ransom. His wife Zainab (the Prophet’s daughter) sent to Medina a necklace which had belonged to her mother (Khadījah) and offered it as ransom for her husband. When the Prophet saw the necklace he recognized it and was much affected. He said to his Companions: "I have no authority to give any direction in this matter, but I know that this necklace is cherished by Zainab as a last memento of her deceased mother and, provided it commends itself to you, I would suggest that she should not be deprived of it and it may be returned to her." They intimated that nothing would give them greater pleasure and readily adopted his suggestion (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 2). He often praised Khadījah to his other wives and stressed her virtues and the sacrifices that she had made in the cause of Islam. On one such occasion ‘Ā’ishah was piqued and said: "O Messenger of Allah, why go on talking of the old lady? God has bestowed better, younger and more attractive wives upon you." The Holy Prophet was overcome by emotion at hearing this and protested: "O no, ‘Ā’ishah! You have no idea how good Khadījah was to me" (*Bukhārī*).

### High Moral Qualities

He was always very patient in adversity. He was never discouraged by adverse circumstances nor did he permit any personal desire to get a hold over him. It has been related already that his father had died before his birth and his mother died while he was still a little child. Up to the age of eight, he was in the guardianship of his grandfather and after the latter's death he was taken care of by his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. Both on account of natural affection and also because he had been specially admonished in that behalf by his father, Abū Ṭālib always watched over his nephew with care and indulgence but his wife was not affected by these considerations to the same degree. It often happened that she would distribute something among her own children, leaving out their little cousin. If Abū Ṭālib chanced to come into the house on such an occasion he would find his little nephew sitting apart, a perfect picture of dignity and without a trace of sulkiness or grievance on his face. The uncle, yielding to the claims of affection and recognizing his responsibility, would run to the nephew, clasp him to his bosom and cry out: "Do pay attention to this child of mine also! Do pay attention to this child of mine also!" Such incidents were not uncommon and those who were witnesses to them were unanimous in their testimony that the young Muḥammad never gave any indication that he was in any way affected by them or that he was in any sense jealous of his cousins. Later in life when he was in a position to do so, he took upon himself the care and upbringing of two of his uncle's sons, 'Alī and Ja'far, and discharged this responsibility in the most excellent manner.

The Holy Prophet, throughout his life, had to encounter a succession of bitter experiences. He was born an orphan, his mother died while he was still a small child and he lost his grandfather at the age of eight years. After marriage he had to bear the loss of several children, one after the other, and then his beloved and devoted wife Khadījah died. Some of the wives he married after Khadījah's death, died during his lifetime and towards the close of his life he had to bear the loss of his son Ibrāhīm. He bore all these losses and calamities cheerfully, and none of them affected in the least degree either his high resolve or the urbanity of his disposition. His private sorrows never found vent in public and he always met everybody with a benign countenance and treated all alike with uniform benevolence. On one occasion he observed a woman who had lost a child occupied in loud mourning over her child's grave. He admonished her to be patient and to accept God's will as supreme. The woman did not know that she was being addressed by the Holy Prophet and replied: "If you had ever suffered the loss of a child as I have, you would have realized how difficult it is to be patient under such an affliction." The Prophet observed: "I have suffered the loss not of one but of seven children,"

and passed on. Except when he referred to his own losses or misfortunes in this indirect manner, he never cared to dwell upon them nor did he permit them in any manner to interfere with his unceasing service to mankind and his cheerful sharing of their burdens.

### **His Self-Control**

He always held himself under complete control. Even when he became a Sovereign he always listened to everybody with patience, and if a person treated him with impertinence he bore with him and never attempted any retaliation. In the East, one way of showing respect for a person whom one is addressing is not to address him by his personal name. The Muslims used to address the Holy Prophet as: "O Messenger of Allah", and non-Muslims used to address him as "Abul-Qāsim" (i.e. Qāsim's father: Qāsim being the name of one of his sons). On one occasion a Jew came to him in Medina and started a discussion with him. In the course of the discussion he repeatedly addressed him as "O Muḥammad, O Muḥammad". The Prophet paid no attention to his form of address and went on patiently expounding the matter under discussion to him. His Companions, however, were getting irritated at the discourteous form of address adopted by his interlocutor till one of them, not being able to restrain himself any longer, admonished the Jew not to address the Prophet by his personal name but to address him as Abul-Qāsim. The Jew said that he would address him only by the name which his parents had given him. The Prophet smiled and said to his Companions: "He is right. I was named Muḥammad at the time of my birth and there is no reason to be upset at his addressing me by that name."

Sometimes people stopped him in the way and engaged him in conversation, explaining their needs and preferring their requests to him. He always stood patiently and let them go on and proceeded only after they had done. On occasion people when shaking hands with him kept hold of his hand for sometime and, though he found this inconvenient and it occasioned a loss of precious time also, he was never the first to withdraw his hand. People went freely to him and laid their troubles and difficulties before him and asked him for help. If he was able to help he never declined to do so. Sometimes he was pestered with requests and they were unreasonably pressed but he went on complying with them as far as he was able. On occasion, after complying with a request, he would admonish the person concerned to have greater trust in God and to avoid asking others for relief. On one occasion a devout Muslim asked him several times for money and each time he complied with his request but in the end said: "It is best for a man to put his trust in God and to avoid making requests." The person concerned was a sincere man. Out

of regard for the feelings of the Prophet, he did not offer to return what he had already received but he declared that in future he would never make a request to anybody under any circumstances. Years later, he was taking part in a battle, mounted on a charger, and in the thick of it when the din and confusion and the clash of arms were at their highest and he was surrounded by his enemies, his whip fell from his hand. A Muslim soldier who was on foot, perceiving his predicament, bent down to pick up the whip for him but the mounted man begged him to desist and jumped from his horse and picked up the whip himself, explaining to the soldier that he had long since promised the Holy Prophet that he would never make any request to anybody and that if he had permitted the soldier to pick up the whip for him it would have amounted to his having made an indirect request and would thus have rendered him guilty of breaking his promise to the Holy Prophet.

### **Justice and Fair Dealing**

The Arabs were greatly given to favouritism and applied different standards to different persons. Even among the so-called civilized nations of today one observes a reluctance to bring prominent persons or persons occupying high positions or offices to account for their doings, though the law is enforced rigorously against the common citizen. The Holy Prophet was, however, unique in enforcing uniform standards of justice and fair dealing. On one occasion a case came before him in which a young woman belonging to a highly respectable family was found to have committed theft. This caused great consternation as, if the normal penalty were imposed upon the young woman, a leading family would be humiliated and disgraced. Many were anxious to intercede with the Prophet on behalf of the offender but were afraid to do so. Eventually Usāmah was prevailed upon to undertake the mission. Usāmah went to the Holy Prophet but the moment the latter perceived the trend of his submission he was much upset and said: "You had better desist. Nations have come to a bad end for showing favours to highly placed persons while pressing hard on the common people. Islam does not permit this and I will certainly not do it. Verily, if my own daughter, Fāṭimah, were to commit an offence I would not hesitate to impose the appropriate penalty" (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Ḥudūd*).

It has already been related that when the Prophet's uncle 'Abbās became a prisoner in the Battle of Badr, he was, like other prisoners, tied up with a rope to prevent his escape. The rope was so tightly secured that he groaned with pain during the night. The Prophet heard his groans and was unable to sleep. The Companions of the Prophet, perceiving this, loosened the rope that bound 'Abbās. When the Prophet got to learn of this, he directed that all prisoners

should be treated alike, saying that there was no reason for showing favour to his own relative. He insisted that either they must loosen the bonds of all the prisoners or must tighten the bonds of ‘Abbās like those of the others. As the Companions of the Prophet did not wish him to be subjected to uneasiness on account of his uncle they undertook to guard the prisoners carefully and loosened the bonds of all of them (*Zurqānī*, Vol. 3, p. 279).

Even during the exigencies of war he was most particular in observing all accepted rules and conventions. On one occasion he despatched a party of his Companions on a scouting expedition. They encountered some men of the enemy on the last day of the sacred month, Rajab. Thinking that it would be dangerous to let them escape and carry to Mecca the tidings of the scouting party being so near, they attacked them and in the course of the skirmish one of them was killed. After the scouting party had returned to Medina the Meccans began to protest that the Muslim scouts had killed one of their men in the sacred month. The Meccans had often been guilty of violating the sanctity of the sacred months vis-a-vis the Muslims whenever it suited them, and it would have been a suitable reply to their protest to say that as the Meccans had themselves set at naught the convention relating to the Sacred Months, so they were not entitled to insist upon their observance by Muslims. But the Prophet did not make this reply. He severely reprimanded the members of the party, refused to accept the booty and according to some reports even paid the blood-money for the person killed, till the revelation of 2:218 cleared the whole position (*Ṭabarī* and *Ḥalbiyyah*).

People are generally careful not to hurt the feelings of their friends and relations but the Holy Prophet was very particular in this respect even regarding people who were opposed to him. On one occasion a Jew came to him and complained that Abū Bakr had hurt his feelings by saying that God had exalted Muḥammad above Moses. The Prophet summoned Abū Bakr and asked him what had transpired. Abū Bakr explained that the Jew had started by saying that he swore by Moses whom God, he said, had exalted above the whole of mankind, and that he (Abū Bakr) had thereupon retorted by swearing by Muḥammad, whom God had exalted above Moses. The Prophet said: "You should not have said this as the feelings of other people should be respected. Nobody should exalt me above Moses" (*Bukhārī*, *Kitābut-Tauḥīd*). This did not mean that the Holy Prophet did not in fact occupy a higher position than Moses but that an affirmation like this addressed to a Jew was likely to hurt his feelings and should have been avoided.

### **Regard for the Poor**

The Holy Prophet was ever concerned to ameliorate the condition of the poorer sections of the community and to raise their status in society. On one

occasion while he was sitting with his Companions, a rich man happened to pass by. The Prophet inquired of one of his Companions what he thought of him. He replied "He is a well-to-do and well-connected man. If he were to ask for the hand of a girl in marriage the request would be favourably considered and if he were to intercede on behalf of anybody the intercession would be accepted." Shortly after, another man passed by who appeared to be poor and of no substance. The Prophet inquired of the same Companion what he thought of him. He replied: "O Messenger of Allah! He is a poor man. If he were to request the hand of a girl in marriage the request would not be favourably received and if he were to intercede on behalf of any person the intercession would be rejected and if he were to seek to engage anybody in conversation no attention would be paid to him." On hearing this the Prophet observed: "The worth of this poor man is much greater than the value of a quantity of gold sufficient to fill the whole universe" (*Bukhārī, Kitābur-Riqāq*).

A poor Muslim woman used to clean the Holy Prophet's mosque in Medina. The Prophet did not see her in the mosque for some days and made inquiries concerning her. He was told that she had died. He said: "Why was I not informed when she died? I would have wished to join her funeral prayers," and added, "perchance you did not consider her worthy of consideration as she was poor. This was not right. Direct me to her grave." He then proceeded to her grave and prayed for her (*Bukhārī, Kitābuṣ-Ṣalāt*). He used to say that there were people with tangled hair whose bodies were covered with dust and who were not welcomed by those who were well-to-do but who were so highly valued by God that if, trusting in God's beneficence, they swore in His name that a certain matter would take a certain turn He would support them." (*Muslim, Kitābul-Birri Waṣ-Ṣilah*). On one occasion some Companions of the Holy Prophet who were freed slaves were sitting together when Abū Sufyān (who was a chieftain among the Quraish and had fought the Muslims up to the surrender of Mecca and had accepted Islam only on that occasion) happened to pass by. These Companions, addressing him, recalled the victory that God had bestowed upon Islam. Abū Bakr also heard this and did not approve of a chieftain of the Quraish being reminded of their humiliation and he reprimanded the group of Companions. He then went to the Holy Prophet and related the incident to him. The Prophet said: "O Abū Bakr! I fear you may have hurt the feelings of these servants of God. If that should be so, God would be offended with you." Abū Bakr at once returned to those people and inquired: "Brothers of mine! Did you feel hurt over what I said?" To which they replied: "We felt no offence at what you said. May God forgive you!" (*Muslim, Kitābul-Faḍā'il*).

While, however, the Prophet insisted that poor people should be respected and their feelings should not be injured and strove to fulfil their needs, he also sought to instil the sentiment of self-respect into them and taught them not to beg for favours. He used to say that it behoved a poor man not to seek to be content with a date or two or with a mouthful or two of food but to restrain himself from making a request, however severely he might be tried (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Kusūf*). On the other hand he used to say that no entertainment would be blessed unless some poor people were also invited to it. ‘Ā’ishah relates that a poor woman came to visit her on one occasion accompanied by her two little daughters. ‘Ā’ishah had nothing with her at the time except one date which she gave to the woman. The woman divided it between her little daughters and then they all departed. When the Prophet came home ‘Ā’ishah related this to him and he said: "If a poor man has daughters and he treats them with consideration, God will save him from the torments of Hell," and added: "God will bestow Paradise upon this woman on account of the consideration she showed towards her daughters" (*Muslim*). On one occasion he was told that one of his Companions, Sa’d, who was a well-to-do person, was boasting of his enterprise to others. When the Prophet heard this, he said: "Let no man imagine that his wealth or standing or power is the result merely of his own efforts or enterprise. That is not so. Your power and your position and your wealth are all earned through the poor." One of his prayers was: "O God! Keep me humble while I am alive and keep me humble when I die and let my resurrection on the Day of Judgement be with the humble" (*Tirmidhī, Abwābuz-Zuhud*).

On one occasion during the hot weather when he was passing through a street, he observed a very poor Muslim carrying heavy loads from one place to another. He was very plain of features which were rendered still more unattractive by a heavy coating of perspiration and dust. He bore a melancholy look. The Holy Prophet approached him stealthily from the back and, as children sometimes do in fun, he put forward his hands and covered the labourer’s eyes with them, expecting him to guess who he was. The man put back his own hands and feeling over the body of the Prophet realized that it was the Holy Prophet himself. He probably guessed also that nobody else would show such intimate affection for a man in his condition. Being pleased and encouraged, he pressed against the Holy Prophet’s body and clasped him to himself rubbing his dust and sweat-covered body against the clothes of the Prophet, desiring perhaps to ascertain how far the Prophet would be willing to indulge him with what he was doing. The Prophet went on smiling and did not ask him to stop. When the man had been put in a thoroughly happy mood the Prophet said to him: "I possess a slave; do you think anybody will be willing to buy him?" The man realized that probably there was nobody in the whole

world, save the Holy Prophet himself who would be ready to see any worth in him, and with a melancholy sigh he replied: "O Messenger of Allah! there is nobody in this world who would be prepared to purchase me." The Prophet said: "No! No! You must not say that. You are of great worth in the eyes of God" (*Sharḥus-Sunnah*).

Not only was he himself watchful of the welfare of the poor but he constantly exhorted others to be the same. Abū Mūsā Ash‘arī relates that if a needy person approached the Holy Prophet and made a request, he would say to those around him, "You should also support his request so that you may acquire merit by becoming sharers in promoting a good deed" (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim*), his object being to create on the one side in the minds of his Companions a feeling of eagerness to help the poor and on the other in the minds of the needy a realization of the affection and sympathy felt for them by their better-off brethren.

### **Safeguarding the Interests of the Poor**

When Islam began to be generally accepted over the greater part of Arabia, the Holy Prophet often received large quantities of goods and money which he immediately distributed amongst those who were in need. On one occasion his daughter Fāṭimah came to him and, showing him her hands which had become calloused by the labour involved in crushing grain with stones, requested that a slave might be allotted to her to lighten her labour. The Prophet replied: "I shall tell you something which will prove to be of far greater worth than a slave. When you go to bed at night you should utter the praise of God thirty-three times, and affirm His perfection an equal number of times and affirm His greatness thirty-four times. This will help you a great deal more than could the possession of a slave" (*Bukhārī*).

While distributing money on one occasion a coin fell from his hands and rolled out of sight. Having finished with the distribution he went to the mosque and led the prayers. It was his practice to remain sitting for a short while after the conclusion of the prayers, occupied in the remembrance of God and thereafter to let people approach him and put questions to him or proffer requests. On this occasion, as soon as the prayers were concluded, he got up and proceeded quickly to his house. He looked for the missing coin and, having recovered it, came back and bestowed it upon a needy person, explaining that the coin had fallen from his hands during the distribution of money and the matter had gone out of his mind but he suddenly recollected it while leading the prayers and he was made uneasy by the thought that if he were to die before he could recover the coin and give it away to some person in need, he would be held responsible for it before God; that was the reason



why he had left the mosque in such a hurry to recover the coin (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Kusūf*).

In his anxiety to fully safeguard the interests of the poor and the needy he went so far as to lay down that no charity should ever be bestowed upon his descendants, fearing lest Muslims out of their love for and devotion towards himself should in course of time make his descendants the principal objects of their charity and thus deprive the poor and needy of their due share. On one occasion somebody brought to him a quantity of dates and offered them as charity. His grandson Imām Ḥasan, who was then only two and a half years of age, happened to be sitting with the Prophet. He picked up one of the dates and put it into his mouth. The Prophet immediately put his finger into the child's mouth and forced the date out of it saying: "We have no right in this. This belongs to the poor among God's creatures" (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Kusūf*).

### **Treatment of Slaves**

He constantly exhorted those who owned slaves to treat them kindly and well. He had laid down that if the owner of a slave beat his slave or abused him, the only reparation that he could make was to set the slave free (*Muslim, Kitābul-Īmān*). He devised means for, and encouraged, the freeing of slaves on every pretext. He said: "If a person owning a slave sets him free, God will in recompense save every part of his body corresponding to every part of the slave's body from the torment of Hell." Again, he laid down that a slave should be asked to perform only such tasks as he could easily accomplish and that when he was set to do a task, his master should help him in performing it so that the slave should experience no feeling of humiliation or degradation (*Muslim*). If a master went on a journey accompanied by a slave, it was his duty to share his mount with the slave either by both riding together or each riding in turn. Abū Hurairah, who used to spend the whole of his time after becoming a Muslim in the company of the Prophet and who had repeatedly heard the Prophet's injunctions regarding the treatment of slaves, has said: "I call God to witness in Whose hands is my life that were it not for the opportunities that I get of joining in holy war and of performing the Pilgrimage and were it not that I have opportunities of serving my old mother, I would have desired to die a slave, for the Holy Prophet constantly insisted upon slaves being well and kindly treated" (*Muslim*). Ma'rūr bin Suwaid relates: "I saw Abū Dharr Ghaffārī (a Companion of the Holy Prophet) wearing clothes exactly similar to those worn by his slave. I inquired of him the reason of this and he said: 'During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet I once taunted a man with his mother having been a slave. Upon this the Holy

Prophet rebuked me and said: "You still seem to entertain pre-Islamic notions. What are slaves? They are your brethren and the source of your power. God in His wisdom confers temporary authority upon you over them. He who has such authority over his brother should feed him with the kind of food he himself eats; clothe him with the kind of clothes he himself wears and should not set him a task beyond his strength and should himself help him in whatever he is asked to do'." On another occasion the Prophet said: "When your servant cooks food for you and sets it out before you, you should ask him to sit down with you to eat or at least to partake of a portion of it in your company, for he has established a right in it by working on it" (*Muslim*).

### **Treatment of Women**

The Holy Prophet was very keen on improving the condition of women in society and on securing for them a position of dignity and fair and equitable treatment. Islam was the first religion which conferred upon women the right of inheritance. The Quran makes daughters along with sons heirs to the property left by their parents. In the same way a mother is made an heir to her son's or daughter's property and a wife is made an heir to her husband's property. When a brother becomes an heir of his deceased brother's property a sister is also an heir to that property. No religion before Islam had so clearly and firmly established a woman's right of inheritance and her right to possess property. In Islam a woman is the absolute owner of her own property and her husband cannot obtain any control over it by virtue merely of their relationship. A woman is at full liberty to deal with her property as she chooses.

The Holy Prophet was so careful with regard to the kind treatment of women that those around him who had not previously been accustomed to looking upon women in the light of helpmates and partners found it difficult to accommodate themselves to the standards that the Prophet was anxious to see set up and maintained. 'Umar relates: "My wife occasionally sought to intervene in my affairs with her counsel and I would rebuke her, saying that the Arabs had never permitted their women to intervene in their affairs. She would retort: 'That is all past. The Holy Prophet lets his wives counsel him in his affairs and he does not stop them. Why don't you follow his example?' My reply used to be: As for 'Ā'ishah the Prophet is particularly fond of her but as regards your daughter (Ḥafṣah), if she does this she will one day have to suffer the consequences of her impertinence.' It so happened that thereafter on one occasion the Holy Prophet, being upset over something, decided to spend a period of time apart from his wives. When I learnt of this I said to my wife,

What I had feared had come to pass. Then I went to the house of my daughter Ḥaṣṣah and found her crying. I inquired of her what the matter was and whether the Prophet had divorced her. She said: 'I don't know about divorce, but the Prophet has decided to remain away from us for sometime.' I said to her: 'Did I not often tell you not to take the same liberties with him as 'Ā'ishah does, for the Holy Prophet is particularly fond of 'Ā'ishah, but you seem to have brought upon yourself what I had feared.' I then went to the Holy Prophet and found him lying down on a rough matting. He was at that time wearing no shirt and his body bore the marks of the pattern of the matting. I sat down near him and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! the Kaiser and the Chosroes do not deserve any of God's favours and yet they pass their lives in great comfort and you who are His Messenger pass your days in such discomfort.' The Prophet replied: 'That is not so. The Messengers of Allah are not expected to spend their time in comfort. That kind of life befits only secular monarchs.' I then related to the Prophet all that had passed between me and my wife and daughter. Hearing me, the Prophet laughed and said: 'It is not true that I have divorced my wives. I have merely thought it advisable to spend a little time away from them' " (*Bukhārī, Kitābun-Nikāḥ*).

He was so careful concerning the sentiments of women that on one occasion when he was leading the prayers he heard the cry of a child and concluded the service quickly, explaining thereafter that as he had heard the cry of the child he imagined that the child's mother would be distressed at its cry and he had therefore concluded the service quickly so that the mother could go to the child and look after it.

When during any of his journeys women were also among the party he always gave directions that the caravan should move slowly and by easy stages. On one such occasion when the men were eager to push forward, he said: "Take care of glass! Take care of glass!" meaning thereby that women were of the party and that if camels and horses were put to the gallop they would suffer from the joltings of the animals (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Adab*). During a battle confusion arose among the ranks of the mounted soldiers and the animals became unmanageable. The Holy Prophet fell from his horse and some of the women also fell from their mounts. One of his Companions, who was riding a camel immediately behind the Prophet jumped down and ran towards him crying: "May I be your sacrifice, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet's foot was still in the stirrup. He released it hastily and said to his Companion: "Don't bother about me, go and help the women." Just before his death one of the injunctions he addressed to Muslims and laid stress upon was that they should always treat women with kindness and consideration. It was an oft-repeated saying of his that if a man had daughters and he arranged to

have them educated and took pains with their upbringing, God would save him from the torment of Hell (*Tirmidhī*).

It was a common practice with the Arabs to inflict physical chastisement upon women for every little fault. The Holy Prophet taught that women were equally with men the creatures of God and were not the slaves of men and should not be beaten. When women got to know of this they went to the other extreme and began to oppose men in everything, with the result that in many homes domestic peace was continually disturbed. 'Umar complained of this to the Holy Prophet and said that unless women could on occasion be chastised they would become unruly and there would be no holding them in check. As detailed Islamic teachings with regard to the treatment of women had not yet been revealed, the Prophet said that if a woman was guilty of serious transgression she might be chastised. This in its turn led the men in many cases to revert to the old Arab practice. It was now the turn of the women to complain and they laid their grievances before the Prophet's wives. Thereupon, the Prophet admonished men and told them that those who treated women with unkindness could never win the favour of God. Thereafter the rights of women were established, and for the first time women began to be treated as free individuals in their own right (*Abū Dāwūd, Kitābun-Nikāḥ*).

Mu'āwiyah al-Qushairī relates: "I inquired of the Holy Prophet what claim my wife had upon me," and he replied: "Feed her with that which God bestows upon you in the way of food, and clothe her with that which God bestows upon you in the way of clothes and do not chastise her nor abuse her nor put her out of your house." He was so careful of the feelings and sentiments of women that he always exhorted those who had to go upon a journey to finish their errands quickly and return home as soon as possible so that their wives and children should not suffer separation longer than was necessary. Whenever he returned from a journey he always came home during the daytime. If he found night approaching towards the end of his journey, he would camp outside Medina for the night and enter it next morning. He also told his Companions that when they returned from a journey they should not come home suddenly without notice of their return (*Bukhārī and Muslim*). In giving this direction he had in mind the fact that the relations between the sexes are largely governed by sentiment. In the absence of the husband a wife may often neglect the care of her body and of her dress and if the husband were to return home unexpectedly the finer sentiments of the wife or the husband might be upset. By giving the direction that when a man returns from a journey he should contrive to arrive home during the daytime and after intimation to the members of his family of his return, he ensured that the members of his family would be ready to receive the returning member in a befitting manner.

### **Attitude Towards the Dead**

He enjoined that every person should make a will concerning the regulation of his affairs after his death so that those connected with him should suffer the minimum of inconvenience after his demise.

He laid down that no man should speak ill of a person who was dead but that whatever of good he had possessed should be emphasized, for no benefit could result to anybody from mentioning the weaknesses or vices of the deceased but by emphasizing his virtues people would be inclined to pray for him (*Bukhārī*). He insisted upon a deceased person's debts being paid before he was buried. He very often satisfied the liabilities of a deceased person himself, but if he was not able to do this, he exhorted the heirs and relatives of the deceased or other persons to discharge his liabilities and would not say the funeral prayers over a deceased person till his liabilities had been discharged.

### **Treatment of Neighbours**

He always treated his neighbours with extreme kindness and consideration. He used to say that the angel Gabriel had emphasized consideration towards one's neighbours so often that he sometimes began to think that a neighbour would perhaps be included among the prescribed heirs. Abū Dharr relates that the Holy Prophet said to him: "Abū Dharr, while broth is being cooked for your family, add a little more water to it so that your neighbour might also share in it." This does not mean that the neighbour should not be invited to share in other things but, as the Arabs were mostly a migratory people and their favourite dish was broth, the Holy Prophet referred to this dish as a typical one and taught that one should not think so much of the taste of the food as of the obligation to share it with one's neighbour.

Abū Hurairah relates: "On one occasion the Holy Prophet exclaimed: 'I call God to witness that he is not a believer! I call God to witness that he is not a believer! I call God to witness that he is not a believer!' The Companions inquired: 'Who is not a believer, o Messenger of Allah?' and he replied: 'He whose neighbour is not secure against injury and ill-treatment at his hands.' On one occasion when he was addressing women, he said: 'If anybody finds only the foot of a goat to cook, that person should share it with his or her neighbour.' He asked people not to object to their neighbours driving pegs into their walls or putting them to any other use which occasioned no injury." Abū Hurairah relates: "The Prophet said: 'He who believes in God and in the Day of Judgement should occasion no inconvenience to his neighbour: he who believes in God and in the Day of Judgement should occasion no inconvenience to his guest, and he who believes in God and in the Day of Judgement should utter only words of virtue or should keep quiet' " (*Muslim*).

### **Treatment of Relatives**

Most people suffer from the failing that when they marry and set up house for themselves, they begin to neglect their parents. The Holy Prophet, therefore, laid great stress upon the meritoriousness of serving one's parents and treating them with kindness and consideration. Abū Hurairah relates: "A man came to the Holy Prophet and asked to be told who was most deserving of kind treatment at his hands. The Prophet replied: 'Your mother'. The man asked 'And next to her?' The Prophet repeated, 'Again thy mother'. The man asked a third time, 'And after my mother?' and the Prophet again replied, 'Still thy mother', and when the man asked him a fourth time, he said: 'After her thy father and after him thy nearest relatives and after them thy more remote relatives.'" The Prophet's own parents and grandparents had died while he was still a child. The parents of some of his wives were, however, alive and he always treated them with great consideration and deference. On the occasion of the surrender of Mecca when the Holy Prophet entered the town as a victorious general, Abū Bakr brought his father to meet him. He said to Abū Bakr: "Why did you trouble your father to come to me? I would gladly have gone to him myself" (*Ḥalbiyyah*, Vol. 3, p. 99). One of his sayings was: "Unlucky is the man whose parents live to old age and he fails to earn Paradise even then", meaning that the service of one's parents particularly when they reach old age attracts the grace and favour of God and, therefore, a person to whom is afforded the opportunity of serving his aged parents and who avails himself of the opportunity to the full is bound to become confirmed in righteous ways and a recipient of the grace of God.

A man once complained to the Holy Prophet that the more benevolence he exercised towards his relations the more hostile they became towards him; and that the more he treated them with kindness the more they persecuted him; and the more he demonstrated affection towards them the more they frowned upon him. The Prophet said: "If what you say is true you are very fortunate, for you will ever be the recipient of God's succour" (*Muslim, Kitābul-Birri Waṣ-Ṣilah*). On one occasion when the Holy Prophet was exhorting people to give alms and charity one of his Companions, Abū Ṭalḥah Anṣārī, came to him and offered to dedicate an orchard for charitable purposes. The Prophet was very pleased and exclaimed, "What an excellent charity! What an excellent charity! What an excellent charity!" and added: "Having dedicated this orchard to the service of the poor, I want you now to divide it among your poor relatives" (*Bukhārī, Kitābut-Tafsīr*). A man came to him on one occasion and said: "O Messenger of Allah! I am prepared to make a covenant of Hijrah and I am prepared to make a covenant to take part in the holy war, for I am anxious to win the pleasure of God." The Holy Prophet

inquired whether either of his parents was alive and the man told him that both were alive. He then asked: "Are you indeed anxious to win the pleasure of God?" and on the man replying in the affirmative the Prophet said: "Then go back to your parents and serve them and serve them well." He pointed out that one's non-Muslim relations were equally entitled to be treated kindly and with consideration along with one's Muslim relations. One of Abū Bakr's wives, who was a non-Muslim, visited her daughter Asmā' and the latter inquired of the Holy Prophet whether she might serve her and make presents to her, to which the Holy Prophet replied: "Certainly, for she is thy mother" (*Bukhārī, Kitābul-Adab*).

He treated not only his near relatives but even remote ones and anybody connected with them with great consideration. Whenever he sacrificed an animal he would send a portion of the meat to the friends of Khadījah (his deceased wife) and told his wives never to overlook them on such occasions. Many years after Khadījah's death when he was sitting with some of his Companions, Khadījah's sister, Ḥālah, came to see him and asked permission to enter. Her voice sounded in the Prophet's ears very much like that of Khadījah and when he heard it he said: "Oh Lord! This is Ḥālah, Khadījah's sister." Indeed, true affection always manifests itself thus that one becomes fond of and considerate towards all those who may be connected with a person whom one loves or holds in high esteem.

Anas bin Mālīk relates that during the course of a journey he found himself in the company of Jarīr bin 'Abdullāh and observed that the latter busied himself in looking after him as a servant looks after his master. As Jarīr bin 'Abdullāh was older than Anas, the latter was embarrassed and protested that Jarīr should not put himself out on his account. Jarīr replied: "I used to observe how devotedly the Anṣār served the Holy Prophet and, being impressed with their devotion to and love for the Holy Prophet, I had resolved in my mind that if I ever happened to be in the company of an Anṣārī, I would serve him like a servant. I am, therefore, only carrying out my resolve and you should not seek to dissuade me" (*Muslim*). This incident affirms that where one person truly loves another, his affection extends also to those who sincerely serve the object of his attachment. In the same way those who truly honour their parents are always deferential and considerate towards those who may be connected with their parents through bonds of affection or relationship. On one occasion the Holy Prophet stressed it as the highest virtue for a man to honour the friends of his father. Among the persons addressed was 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar. Many years after, while proceeding on Pilgrimage, he met a Bedouin and he made over to him his own mount and also presented him with his turban. One of his companions observed that he

had been over-generous as a Bedouin would be pleased with very little. ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar said: "This man's father was a friend of my father's and I have heard the Holy Prophet say that it is one of the highest virtues for a man to honour his father's friends."

### **Keeping Good Company**

He always preferred to keep company with the virtuous and if he observed any weakness in any of his Companions he admonished him gently and in private. Abū Mūsā Ash‘arī relates: "The Holy Prophet illustrated the benefit to be derived from good friends and virtuous companions and the injury to be apprehended from evil friends and vicious companions by saying: 'A man who keeps company with virtuous people is like a person who carries about musk with him. If he partakes of it he derives benefit from it, if he sells it he makes a profit out of it and if he merely keeps it he enjoys its fragrance. A man who keeps company with evil persons is like one who blows into a charcoal furnace; all that he can expect is that a spark may alight upon his clothes and set them on fire or that the smoke emitted by the charcoal may upset his brain'." He used to say that a man's character takes on the colour of the company he keeps and that therefore one should be careful to spend one's time in the company of the good (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim*).

### **Safeguarding People's Faith**

The Holy Prophet was very careful to safeguard against possible misunderstandings. On one occasion his wife Ṣafīyyah came to see him in the mosque. When the time came for her to return home it had become dark and the Prophet decided to escort her to her house. On the way he passed by two men and, wishing to avoid any speculation on their part as to his companion, he stopped them and lifting the veil from the face of his wife said: "See, this is Ṣafīyyah, my wife." They protested saying: "O Messenger of Allah! why did you imagine that we should fall into any misconception regarding you?" The Prophet replied "Satan (i.e. evil thoughts) often courses through a man's blood. I was afraid lest your faith be affected" (*Bukhārī*, *Abwābul-ʾIṭikāf*).

### **Overlooking Faults of Others**

He never gave publicity to the faults and shortcomings of others and admonished people not to proclaim their own faults. He used to say: "If a person covers up the faults of another, God will cover up his faults on the Day of Judgement." And, "Every one of my followers can escape the consequences of his errors (i.e. by true repentance and reform) except those who go on proclaiming their wrongdoing" and illustrated this by saying: "A man commits



a sin at night and God covers it up; in the morning he meets his friends and boasts before them: 'I did this last night, I did that last night,' and thus he himself lays bare that which God had covered up" (*Bukhārī* and *Muslim*).

Some people foolishly imagine that a confession of sin helps towards repentance; the truth is that it only fosters immodesty. Sin is an evil and he who slips into it and becomes a prey to shame and remorse has a chance of climbing back into the path of purity and righteousness through repentance. His case is like that of a person who has been seduced by evil but is pursued by righteousness and as soon as a chance offers, the evil is vanquished and the sinner is claimed back by righteousness. Those, however, who proclaim their sins and take pride in them lose all sense of good and evil and become incapable of repentance.

On one occasion a man came to the Holy Prophet and said: "I have been guilty of adultery" (this when established by proper evidence being a punishable offence under Islamic Law). Hearing the man's confession, the Holy Prophet turned away from him and became occupied with something else. He meant to indicate that the proper remedy in such a case was repentance and not public confession. But the man did not realize this and imagining that the Prophet had not heard him, went and stood in front of him and, addressing him, repeated his confession. The Holy Prophet again turned away from him but the man again went and stood in front of him and repeated his confession. When he had done this four times the Prophet said "I had wished that this man should not have proclaimed his sin till God should have indicated His will with regard to him but, as he has repeated his confession four times, I am compelled to take action" (*Tirmidhī*). 'He then added: "This man has himself confessed and has not been charged by the woman concerning whom he makes the confession. The woman should be questioned and, if she denies her guilt, she should not be molested and only this man should be punished in accordance with his confession but, if she confesses she should also be punished." It was the practice of the Holy Prophet to follow the Law of the Torah in matters regarding which the Quran was silent, and as the Torah prescribes that an adulterer should be stoned to death he pronounced the sentence upon this man accordingly. When the sentence was being carried out the man tried to run away but the people pursued him and carried out the sentence. When the Prophet came to know of this he disapproved of it. He said that the man had been sentenced in accordance with his own confession. His attempt to run away was in effect a retraction of his confession and thereafter he should not have been subjected to a penalty which had been imposed upon him solely on account of his confession.

The Prophet laid down that the Law was concerned only with overt acts.

During the course of a war, a party of Muslims came upon a non-Muslim who used to lie in wait in lonely places and whenever he found a solitary Muslim he would attack and kill him. On this occasion Usāmah bin Zaid pursued him and, having overtaken and caught him, drew his sword to kill him. When the man found that no way of escape was left open to him he repeated the first portion of the Muslim confession of faith, viz., "There is no being worthy of worship save Allah," thereby indicating that he had accepted Islam. Usāmah paid no heed to this and killed him. When this, among the other incidents of the campaign, was related to the Holy Prophet he sent for Usāmah and questioned him. On his confirming the account of the incident the Prophet said: "How will it be with you on the Day of Judgement when his confession of faith will bear witness in his favour?" Usāmah replied, "O Messenger of Allah! that man was a murderer of Muslims and his declaring himself to be a Muslim was merely a ruse to escape just retribution." But the Prophet went on repeating: "Usāmah, how will it be with you when the man's confession of faith will bear witness against you on the Day of Judgement?" meaning that God would hold Usāmah to account for the man's death, for though he had been guilty of the murder of Muslims, his reciting the confession was an indication that he had repented of his misdeeds. Usāmah protested that the man's reciting of confession of faith was due to his fear of death and was not an indication of repentance. Thereupon the Holy Prophet said:

"Did you peep into his heart to see whether he was telling the truth or not?" and went on repeating: "How will you answer on the Day of Judgement when his confession of faith will be cited in evidence against you?" Usāmah says: "On hearing the Prophet repeat this so often I wished that I had become a convert to Islam only that moment and had not been guilty of what was charged against me" (*Muslim, Kitābul-Īmān*).

The Holy Prophet was ever ready to forgive people their faults and trespasses. One of the persons concerned in the affair of the slander against his wife, 'Ā'ishah, was dependent for his living upon the charity of Abū Bakr ('Ā'ishah's father). When the falsehood of the allegation against 'Ā'ishah was clearly established, Abū Bakr stopped his support of this man. Even this is evidence of Abū Bakr's commendable moderation and restraint. An average person would have proceeded to extreme lengths against a dependent who had been guilty of defaming his daughter. When the Prophet came to know of what Abū Bakr had done, he spoke to him and pointed out that though the man had been at fault, it did not behove a person like Abū Bakr to deprive him of his means of sustenance on account of his wrongdoing. Thereupon Abū Bakr resumed his patronage of the man (*Bukhārī, Kitābut-Taḥṣīn*).

### **Patience in Adversity**

The Holy Prophet used to say: "For a Muslim, life is all full of good and nobody but a true believer finds himself in that position; for, if he meets with success he is grateful to God and becomes the recipient of greater favours from Him. On the other hand, if he suffers pain or tribulation he endures it with patience and thus again makes himself deserving of God's favours." When his end drew near and he gave vent to a groan in the extremity of his condition, his daughter Fāṭimah exclaimed that she could not bear to see him in that state. Thereupon he said: "Have patience! Your father will suffer no pain after this day," meaning that all his troubles were confined to this world and from the moment that he was released from this life and entered the presence of his Maker he would be subject to no further pain. During the prevalence of an epidemic he would not approve of people moving out of an afflicted town into another, for this serves to enlarge the area of the pestilence. He used to say that in times of epidemic if a person stayed on in his own town and refrained from carrying infection into unaffected areas and died of the epidemic, he would be regarded as a martyr (*Bukhārī, Kitabuṭ-Ṭibb*).

### **Mutual Cooperation**

He used to teach that one of the best Islamic characteristics was that a man should not interfere in matters with which he was not concerned and that people should not go about criticizing others and interfering in matters that were not their concern. This is a principle which if generally adopted and enforced would go a long way towards securing peace and orderliness in the world. A large part of our troubles is due to the tendency of the majority of people to indulge in undue interference and to hold back their cooperation when it may be needed in providing relief for those in distress.

The Holy Prophet laid great stress upon mutual cooperation. He had made it a rule that if any person was called upon to pay a sum of money by way of penalty and was unable to put up the whole amount, his neighbours or his fellow-citizens or his fellow-tribesmen should make up the amount by raising a subscription. People sometimes came and took up their residence near the Prophet, devoting their time to the service of Islam in various ways. He always counselled their relatives to assume the responsibility of providing for their modest requirements. It is reported by Anas that during the time of the Holy Prophet two brothers accepted Islam and one of them stayed on with the Holy Prophet while the other continued with his normal occupation. The latter, later on, complained to the Holy Prophet that his brother was spending his time in idleness. The Holy Prophet said: "God provides for you also on account of your brother and it behoves you therefore to make provision for

him and leave him free to serve the Faith" (*Tirmidhī*).

During the course of a journey, when the Prophet's party arrived at their camping place, his Companions immediately occupied themselves with their respective tasks in setting up camp for the night. The Holy Prophet said: "You have allotted no task to me. I shall go and collect fuel for cooking." His Companions protested and said: "O Messenger of Allah! why should you occupy yourself in that way when all of us are here to do whatever may be necessary?" He said: "No, No. It is my duty to do my share of whatever may have to be done," and he collected fire-wood from the jungle for cooking the food (*Zurqānī*, Vol. 4, p. 306).

### Truthfulness

As has been related, the Holy Prophet was himself so rigid in his standards of truthfulness that he was known among his people as "The trustworthy" and "The truthful". He was equally anxious that Muslims should adopt the same standards of truth as were observed by himself. He regarded truth as the basis of all virtue, goodness and right conduct. He taught that a truthful person is one who is so confirmed in truth that he is counted truthful by God.

On one occasion a prisoner was brought to the Holy Prophet who had been guilty of the murder of many Muslims. 'Umar, who was also present, believed that the man richly deserved the imposition of the death penalty and he looked repeatedly at the Prophet expecting that the Prophet would at any moment indicate that the man should be put to death. After the Holy Prophet had dismissed the man 'Umar submitted that he should have been put to death as that was the only appropriate penalty. The Prophet replied: "If that is so, why did you not kill him?" 'Umar replied: "O Messenger of Allah! if you had but given me an indication even by a flicker of your eyelids, I would have done so." To this the Prophet rejoined: "A Prophet does not act equivocally. How could I have employed my eye to indicate the imposition of a death penalty upon the man while my tongue was employed in talking amicably to him?" (*Hishām*, Vol. 2, p. 217).

A man once came to the Holy Prophet and said: "O Messenger of Allah! I suffer from three evils: falsehood, indulgence in strong drinks and fornication. I have tried my utmost to get rid of them but have not succeeded. Will you tell me what to do?" The Prophet replied: "If you make a firm promise to me to give up one of them I guarantee that you will be rid of the other two." The man promised and asked the Prophet to tell him which of the three he should give up. The Prophet said: "Give up falsehood." Sometime later the man came back and told the Holy Prophet that, having followed his advice, he was now

free from all three vices. The Prophet asked him for the details of his struggle and the man said: "One day I wanted to indulge in liquor and was about to do so when I bethought myself of my promise to you and realized that if any of my friends asked me whether I had taken liquor, I would have to admit it as I could no longer utter a falsehood. This would mean that I would acquire an evil reputation among my friends and they would in future avoid me. Thinking thus, I persuaded myself to postpone drinking to some later occasion and was able to withstand the temptation at the time. In the same way when I found myself inclined towards fornication I argued with myself that indulgence in the vice would expose me to the loss of the esteem of my friends as I would either have to tell a falsehood if questioned by them, thus breaking my promise to you, or I would have to admit my sin. In this way I continued to struggle between my resolve to fulfil my promise to you and my desire to indulge in liquor and in adultery. When sometime had passed I began to lose the inclination to indulge in these vices and the resolve to keep away from falsehood has now saved me from the other two also."

### **Inquisitiveness**

The Holy Prophet always exhorted people against inquisitiveness and to think well of each other. Abū Hurairah relates: "The Prophet said: 'Save yourselves from thinking ill of others for this is the greatest falsehood, and do not be inquisitive or apply epithets to each other out of contempt nor be envious of each other and do not entertain ill feelings towards each other; let each of you regard himself as the servant of God and treat others as his brothers as God has commanded,' and also 'Remember that every Muslim is a brother to every other Muslim. No Muslim should trespass against another or desert another in times of distress or look down upon another on account of his lack of substance or learning or any other thing. Purity springs from the heart and it is enough to defile a man's heart that he should look down upon his brother. Every Muslim must regard another Muslim's life, honour and property as sacred and inviolate. God does not regard your bodies nor your countenances nor your external actions but looks into your hearts" (*Muslim, Kitābul-Birri Waṣ-Ṣilah*).

### **Frank and Straightforward Dealing**

He was anxious to safeguard Muslims against indulgence in any form of unfairness in their transactions. Passing through the market-place on one occasion, he observed a heap of corn which was being put to auction. He thrust his arm into the heap and found that though the outer layer of the corn was dry the corn inside was wet. He inquired from the owner the cause of this. The man explained that a sudden shower of rain had made part of the corn

wet. The Prophet said that in that case he should have allowed the wet layer of corn to remain on the outside so that prospective purchasers could have appraised its real condition. He observed: "He who deals unfairly with others can never become a useful member of society" (*Muslim*). He insisted upon trade and commerce being entirely free from every suspicion of sharp practice. He exhorted purchasers always to inspect the goods and articles they proposed to purchase, and forbade any person to open negotiations for a transaction while negotiations about it were in progress with any other person. He also forbade the hoarding of commodities against a rise in the market and insisted that the market should be regularly supplied.

### **Pessimism**

He was an enemy of pessimism. He used to say that whoever was guilty of spreading pessimism among the people was responsible for the downfall of the people, for pessimistic ideas have a tendency to discourage people and arrest progress (*Muslim*, Part II, Vol. 2). He warned his people against pride and boastfulness on the one hand and against pessimism on the other. He exhorted them to tread the middle path between these extremes. Muslims must work diligently in the trust that God would bless their efforts with the best results. Each should strive to go forward and should seek to promote the welfare and progress of the community, but everyone should be free from any feeling of pride or any tendency towards boastfulness.

### **Cruelty to Animals**

He warned people against cruelty to animals and enjoined kind treatment to them. He used to relate the instance of a Jewish woman who was punished by God for having starved her cat to death. He also used to relate the story of a woman who found a dog suffering from thirst near a deep well. She took off her shoe and lowered it into the well and thus drew up some water. She gave the water to the thirsty dog to drink. This good deed earned her God's forgiveness for all her previous sins.

‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd relates: "While we were in the course of a journey along with the Holy Prophet we saw two young doves in a nest and we caught them. They were still very small. When their mother returned to the nest, not finding her little ones in it, she began to wildly fly around. When the Holy Prophet arrived at the spot he observed the dove and said, 'If any one of you has caught its young ones he must release them at once to comfort it' " (*Abū Dawūd*). ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd also relates that on one occasion they observed an ant-hill and, placing some straw on top of it, they set fire to it; whereupon they were rebuked by the Holy Prophet. On one occasion the Prophet observed a donkey being branded on the face. He inquired the reason

for this and was told that the Romans had recourse to this practice for the purpose of identifying high-bred animals. The Prophet said that as the face was a very sensitive part of the body, an animal should not be branded on the face and that if it had to be done the branding should be done on its haunches (*Abū Dāwūd* and *Tirmidhī*). Since then Muslims always brand animals on their haunches and, following this Muslim practice, Europeans also do the same.

### **Tolerance in Religious Matters**

The Holy Prophet not only emphasized the desirability of tolerance in religious matters but set a very high standard in this respect. A deputation from a Christian tribe of Najrān visited him in Medina to exchange views on religious matters. It included several Church dignitaries. The conversation was held in the mosque and extended over several hours. At one stage the leader of the deputation asked permission to depart from the mosque and to hold their religious service at some convenient spot. The Holy Prophet said that there was no need for them to go out of the mosque, which was itself a place consecrated to the worship of God, and they could hold their service in it (*Zurqānī*).

### **Bravery**

Several instances of his courage and bravery have been set out in the biographical portion. It suffices to relate one here. At one time Medina was full of rumours that the Romans were preparing a large army for its invasion. During that time Muslims were always on the *qui vive* at night. One night sounds of an uproar came from the desert. Muslims hurried out of their homes and some of them collected in the mosque and waited for the Holy Prophet to appear and to give them directions to meet the contingency. Presently they saw the Holy Prophet on a horse coming back from the direction of the sounds. They then discovered that at the very first sound of alarm the Prophet had mounted a horse and gone in the direction from which the sounds had come to find out whether there was any reason for alarm and had not waited for people to collect together so that he could proceed in company. When he came back he assured his Companions that there was no cause for alarm and that they could return to their homes and go to sleep (*Bukhārī, chap. on Shujā'at fil-Harb*).

### **Consideration Towards The Uncultured**

He was particularly considerate towards those who from lack of cultural training did not know how to behave. On one occasion a dweller of the desert who had only recently accepted Islam and who was sitting in the company of

the Holy Prophet in the mosque got up and walking away a few paces sat down in a corner of the mosque to pass water. Some of the Companions of the Prophet got up to stop him from doing so. The Prophet restrained them, pointing out that any interference with the man was bound to cause inconvenience to him and might possibly cause him injury. He told his Companions to let the man alone and to clean the spot later.

### **The Fulfilling of Covenants**

The Holy Prophet was very particular with regard to the fulfilling of covenants. On one occasion an envoy came to him on a special mission and, after he had remained in his company for some days, he was convinced of the truth of Islam and suggested that he might declare his adherence to it. The Prophet told him that this would not be proper as he was there in a representative capacity and it was incumbent upon him to return to the headquarters of his government without acquiring a fresh allegiance. If, after he had returned home, he still felt convinced of the truth of Islam he could return as a free individual and declare his acceptance of it (*Abū Dāwud, ch. on Wafā bil-‘Ahd*).

### **Deference Towards Servants of Humanity**

He paid special deference to those who devoted their time and substance to the service of mankind. The Arab tribe, the Banū Ṭā’ī started hostilities against the Prophet and in the ensuing battle their forces were defeated and some were taken prisoner. One of these was the daughter of Ḥātim Ṭā’ī, whose generosity had become a proverb amongst the Arabs. When Ḥātim’s daughter informed the Holy Prophet of her parentage he treated her with great consideration and as the result of her intercession he remitted all the penalties imposed upon her people on account of their aggression (*Ḥalbiyyah, Vol. 3, p. 227*).

The character of the Holy Prophet is so many-sided that it is not possible to deal adequately with it within the space of a few pages.



## THE COMPILATION OF THE QURAN

It has been demonstrated in the opening portion of this Introduction that the text of none of the sacred scriptures, claimed to have been revealed before the Quran, has been preserved intact. They have all been interfered with to such an extent that an earnest seeker after truth finds it impossible to adopt any of them as a practical guide for right conduct. In contrast with this, the text of the Quran has been preserved intact and every word of it has come down to us as free from interference and interpolation as when it was revealed to the Holy Prophet 1350 years ago.

The Quran began to be revealed at the outset of the Mission of the Holy Prophet. The first revelation, comprising only a few verses, was received by him in the Hīrā Cave. Thereafter the revelation continued till his death. Thus the total period during which the entire Quran was revealed extended to twenty-three years. We know, on the basis of the testimony of his contemporaries, that in the beginning revelation came to the Prophet at intervals and in small bits, but as time passed it grew both in volume and in frequency till in the last years of his life it swelled into an almost continuous stream. One reason for this, among others, was that the teachings contained in this revelation were altogether novel and it was not easy for people to grasp their full significance. Therefore the Quran was revealed in small portions in the beginning. But after the basic principles of Islam had been fully grasped and it became comparatively easy for people to understand the teachings and the topics dealt with in the Quran, the revelation began to arrive faster and in larger volume. The object was that all Muslims should be enabled fully to grasp the teachings of the Quran. Another reason was that the number of Muslims was very small in the beginning and, as God intended that the text of the Quran should be scrupulously preserved and that it should not become the subject of any doubt, only small portions were revealed at a time in the beginning and there was always an interval, sometimes extending to several months, between the revelation of one group of verses and the next. In this manner the few Muslims were enabled to commit the whole revelation to memory, so as to place the matter of the preservation of the text beyond doubt. When the number of Muslims began to increase and the safeguarding and preservation of the text of the Quran became easier, the revelation began to arrive faster. Towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life the number of Muslims exceeded a hundred thousand and the memorizing of the Quran became very easy. At that time the revelation came faster still. By this divine plan the purity of the text of the Quran was placed beyond doubt.

During the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān seven copies of the Quran were despatched to different parts of the Muslim world and they in turn became the standard texts from which other copies were made and thereafter in each generation hundreds of thousands of people have been in the habit of committing the entire text of the Quran to memory. Even the bitterest enemies of Islam do not allege that any interference with the text of the Quran has taken place since the time of ‘Uthmān. Those who seek to raise doubts regarding the purity of the text of the Quran direct their criticism to the period between the death of the Holy Prophet and the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān.

Whenever any portion of the Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet, he used to commit it to memory and, as he continuously recited the Quran from one end to the other, he always carried the whole of the revealed Quran at all times in his memory. In addition to this the following devices were adopted for safeguarding and preserving intact the text of the Quran:

### **Devices Adopted to Safeguard the Text of the Quran**

(1) As soon as a revelation was received by the Holy Prophet it was recorded in writing from his dictation. A number of persons are known to have been employed by the Holy Prophet for this purpose. Of these the names of the following fifteen have been mentioned in the traditions (*Fathul-Bārī*, Vol. 9, p. 19):

1. Zaid bin Thābit.
2. Ubayy ibn Ka‘b.
3. ‘Abdullāh bin Sa‘d bin Abī Sarah.
4. Zubair bin al-‘Awwām.
5. Khālīd bin Sa‘īd bin al-‘Āṣ.
6. Abān bin Sa‘īd bin al-‘Āṣ.
7. Hanḏalah bin ar-Rabī al-Asadī.
8. Mu‘aiqib bin Abī Fāṭimah.
9. ‘Abdullāh bin Arqam az-Zuhrī.
10. Shuraḥbīl bin Ḥasana.
11. ‘Abdullāh bin Rawāḥah.
12. Abū Bakr.
13. ‘Umar.
14. ‘Uthmān.
15. ‘Alī

Whenever the Holy Prophet received a revelation, he would send for one of these persons and dictate to him the text of the revelation he had received.

(2) As is well known, the five daily congregational prayers are obligatory upon every Muslim and a portion of the Quran must be recited in each of

them so that every Muslim knows some portion of the Quran by heart. If every hundred out of the Prophet's Companions who numbered more than one hundred thousand had between them learnt the whole of the Quran by heart the entire Quran must have been preserved in the memory of his Companions a thousand times over.

(3) The whole of the law, doctrine, philosophy, moral precepts and other teachings of Islam are contained in the Quran. The building up and the fostering of a nation require the aid of all these. The Holy Prophet used to train Muslims for the discharge of the multifarious duties and functions involved in the building up and direction of a civilized and cultured community. For instance, there were needed judges, jurists, expounders of doctrine and those who explained the legal and moral injunctions of Islam and these people could not adequately discharge their functions unless they had learnt the Quran by heart. All such people, therefore, were under the necessity of committing the entire Quran to memory.

(4) The Holy Prophet used always to stress the meritoriousness of committing the Quran to memory, so much so that he is reported as having said that if a person commits the Quran to memory he would be saved from the torment of Hell. God had blessed the Holy Prophet with Companions who were always eager to acquire merit in every way so that when he made this announcement very large numbers from among them began to commit the Quran to memory, including those whose enunciation was not very clear and who were not men of any learning at all. Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal has related on the authority of 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar that a man came to the Holy Prophet and said to him: "O Messenger of Allah! I memorize the Quran but my mind does not grasp its full meaning." This shows that not only men of learning but even the common people were in the habit of committing the Quran to memory. Another tradition, related by Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal on the same authority, states that a man brought his son to the Holy Prophet and said: "O Messenger of Allah! this son of mine goes on reciting the Quran the whole day and spends his night in sleep." The Holy Prophet observed: "Then where is the occasion for you to worry? Your son spends the day in the remembrance of God and instead of committing any transgression at night spends it in restful sleep." This shows that even the common people living at a distance from the Holy Prophet had started the practice of committing the Quran to memory.

### **Instructors of the Quran**

(5) As the eagerness of the people for memorizing the Quran increased, the Holy Prophet appointed four principal teachers of the Quran who used to memorize it under the supervision of the Holy Prophet and then taught other

people to commit it to memory. These four in turn trained a number of other people who became competent to teach the Quran. These four were:

1. ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd.
2. Sālim Maulā Abī Ḥudhaifah.
3. Mu‘ādh bin Jabal.
4. Ubayy ibn Ka‘b.

The first two of these were Meccans who had migrated to Medina and the last two were Anṣārīs. ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd used to occupy himself as a labourer, Sālim was a freed slave, and Mu‘ādh and Ubayy were two of the leading men of Medina. Thus the Holy Prophet appointed teachers of the Quran from among different sections so that nobody should have any difficulty in approaching them and learning from them. The Holy Prophet used to say: "Those of you who wish to learn the Quran should learn it from ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd, Sālim Maulā Abī Ḥudhaifah, Mu‘ādh bin Jabal or Ubayy ibn Ka‘b (*Muslim*). These four had learnt the whole of the Quran under the supervision of the Holy Prophet. But many other Companions of the Holy Prophet had also learnt portions of it directly from him. It is related that on one occasion when ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd was reciting the Quran ‘Umar pointed out that a certain word should be pronounced in a particular way. ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd protested that he had been taught by the Holy Prophet to pronounce it in the manner in which he had pronounced it. ‘Umar took him to the Holy Prophet and complained that he did not recite the Quran correctly. The Holy Prophet asked him to recite the portion concerning which there was a difference of opinion between the two and when he recited it the Prophet said he was quite right. Thereupon ‘Umar submitted that he had been taught by the Prophet to pronounce the word differently. The Prophet then asked him to recite the verse and when he did so, told him that that was also correct.

This shows that in addition to the four Companions whom the Holy Prophet used to teach the whole of the Quran there were others who used to learn portions of it from him.

‘Umar’s submission that he had been taught to pronounce a certain word in a particular way shows that he, too, used to learn portions of the Quran from the Holy Prophet himself.

The difference that arose between ‘Umar and ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd had no reference to any variation in the text of the Quran. It related only to a vowel point. Vowel points are a peculiarity of the Arabic language and in the case of certain verbs a variation in respect of vowel points is permissible and does not affect the meaning. For instance, in some cases a reading both with an 'a' and with an 'i' is permissible either as a general alternative reading or as a tribal or family practice. But the meaning in each case is the same. The Holy

Prophet, recognizing such practices, gave permission under divine dispensation for the adoption of alternative enunciations, as this had not the effect of altering the meaning or sense of the words. As non-Arabic-speaking peoples are not familiar with this peculiarity of the Arabic language, they are apt to fall into the misconception that such alternative enunciations amounted to variations in the text and that the Holy Prophet was in the habit of teaching certain verses of the Quran in one way to one person and in a different way to another. In fact nothing of the kind ever took place. The variations which have become the subject matter of discussion were not variations either of the text of a verse or even variations of a word. They were all cases of enunciation of vowel points which did not in any way alter the meaning or significance of a word. The only difference was that some tribes or families, being accustomed to pronounce certain verbs in particular declensions in a certain manner, were permitted to do so.

### **Reciters of the Quran**

In addition to the four principal teachers of the Quran who had been trained by the Holy Prophet himself there were certain other well-known reciters who had committed the whole of the Quran to memory. Among these were:

- (1) Zaid bin Thābit, who was also one of the recorders of the revelation.
- (2) Abū Zaid Qais bin As-Sakan, an Anṣārī, who belonged to the Banū Najjār, which was the tribe of the Prophet's mother (*Fathul-Bārī*, Vol. 9, p. 49).
- (3) Abū Dardā' Anṣārī (*Bukhārī*).
- (4) Abū Bakr, concerning whom also it is related that from the very beginning he was in the habit of committing the Quran to memory.
- (5) 'Alī not only knew the Quran by heart but shortly after the Holy Prophet's death undertook to arrange the Quran in the order in which it had been revealed.
- (6) Nasā'ī relates that 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar also knew the Quran by heart and used to recite the whole of it in the course of one night. When the Holy Prophet got to know of this he told him to complete the recitation in the course of a month and not to attempt to recite the whole of the Quran in one night as this might prove burdensome for him.
- (7) Abū 'Ubaid relates that out of the Muhājirīn the following had committed the Quran to memory:

Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Ṭalḥah, Sa'd Ibn Mas'ūd, Ḥudhaifah, Sālim, Abū Hurairah, 'Abdullāh bin Sā'ib, 'Abdullāh bin Umar and 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās. And out of the women:

'Ā'ishah, Ḥafṣah and Ummi Salamah.

Most of these had committed the Quran to memory during the Prophet's lifetime and some of them after his death. Ibn Abū Dāwūd relates in his book, the *Ash-Sharī'ah*, that Tamīm bin Aus ad-Dārī and 'Uqba bin 'Āmir from among the Muhājirīn had also committed the Quran to memory. Other historians include in this list 'Amr bin al-'Aṣ and Abū Mūsā Ash'arī.

From among the Anṣār those who were well known to have committed the Quran to memory were:

'Ubādah bin Ṣāmit, Mu'ādh, Majmma' bin Ḥārithah, Fudālah bin 'Ubaid, Maslamah bin Mukhallad, Abū Dardā', Abū Zaid, Zaid bin Thābit, Ubayy bin Ka'b, Sa'd bin 'Ubādah, and Umm Waraqah.

### **The Quran Committed to Memory**

In actual fact it is well known that a very large number of the Companions of the Holy Prophet had committed the Quran to memory. As has been related in the biographical portion with reference to the incident of Bi'r Ma'ūnah, the Holy Prophet in the fourth year of the Hijrah despatched seventy of his Companions as instructors for certain tribes and every one of them knew the Quran by heart.

Those who had committed the Quran to memory spent the greater part of their time in reciting it to others at all hours of the day and night. Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ya'lā relates that the Holy Prophet was informed on one occasion that Abū Mūsā was instructing the people in the recitation of the Quran in his house. The Prophet asked to be led to some part of the house where he could listen to Abū Mūsā without his presence becoming known to the assembled company. He was led to such a place and having heard Abū Mūsā recite the Quran he approved of his recitation and was much pleased with it and observed: "He recites the Quran in the beautiful manner of the Prophet David" (*Muslim, Kitābus-Ṣalāt*). This shows that the Holy Prophet took pains to supervise the recitation of the Quran by people other than the four whom he had appointed as the principal teachers of the Quran and was anxious to see that no error should creep into their recitation.

Imām Aḥmad Ḥanbal relates on the authority of Jabir bin 'Abdullāh that on one occasion when the Holy Prophet came to the mosque he found people reciting the Quran and he said: "Recite the Quran and recite it well and strive to win the pleasure of God through it, before the time comes when people will recite the Quran correctly but with the object of making it a means of earning their livelihood rather than a means of the purification of their hearts (*Musnad*, Vol. 3). Jābir bin 'Abdullāh relates that the company that was engaged in the recitation of the Quran on this occasion comprised not only the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār but also desert dwellers and non-Arabs.

Those who had become competent to recite the Quran during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet could be numbered in thousands. Immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet, when Musailimah declared war and marched against Medina at the head of a hundred thousand warriors, Abū Bakr sent Khālīd bin Walīd in command of 13,000 soldiers to oppose him. As this number included many who had only recently accepted Islam and had not yet become imbued with its spirit or traditions, the Muslim forces were pressed back at several points. At this juncture some of the Companions of the Holy Prophet who knew the Quran by heart put forward the suggestion that all those in the army who had the Quran by heart should be formed into a separate force and should be sent forward to oppose Musailimah's men. It was thought that as these people appreciated the true value of Islam and the need of safeguarding it with their lives, their zeal and devotion would prevail against the much larger numbers of the enemy. Khālīd bin Walīd accepted this suggestion and formed a special force of those who knew the Quran by heart. These numbered 3,000. This force attacked Musailimah's army with such vehemence that it was forced to retreat and was eventually beleaguered and destroyed. On that occasion these 3,000 chose as their motto: "O ye that know the *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah by heart" (*Sūrah* Al-Baqarah was mentioned as it is the longest chapter of the Quran). Five hundred of this special force of 3,000 were killed in this battle. Says Sir William Muir: "The carnage amongst the 'Readers' (those who had the Koran by heart) was so great as to give 'Umar the first idea of collecting the Sacred Text lest any part of it should be lost" (The Caliphate).

Thus we find that in the time of the Holy Prophet himself the Quran used to be recorded in writing, was committed to memory and was constantly recited and thousands of people knew the whole of it by heart, though it had not yet been collected in one volume.

### **The Quran Collected in One Volume**

When it was found that 500 of the reciters of the Quran had been killed in the battle with Musailimah's army, 'Umar suggested to Abū Bakr (who was then the *Khalīfah*) that if those who had the Quran by heart began to be lost in battles in such large numbers, the safeguarding of the purity of its text would become difficult and that the time had therefore arrived when the whole of the Quran should be collected in one volume. Abū Bakr at first demurred but eventually accepted the suggestion and appointed Zaid bin Thābit, being one of those who used to record the Quran at the dictation of the Holy Prophet, to collect the text of the Quran in one volume and appointed prominent Companions of the Holy Prophet to assist him in the task. Abū Bakr directed that the text of the Quran should be collected from its recorded fragments and

that the accuracy of the text should be certified by two persons who knew the whole of the Quran by heart. This task was soon accomplished and a written text of the whole of the Quran was got together in one volume, which was certified as accurate by those who knew it by heart. On the basis of these facts can there be the slightest ground for suggesting that variations in the text of the Quran had crept in between the death of the Holy Prophet and the compilation of the Quran into one volume under the directions of Abū Bakr and the supervision of Zaid bin Thābit? Can it be reasonably suggested that any difficulty could arise in the compilation into one volume of a Book which was being continuously recited everyday by large numbers of persons, the whole text of which used to be recited from beginning to end in the course of the month of Ramadan by persons who had committed it to memory to the Muslims assembled in congregational prayers, the congregation itself containing large numbers of people who knew the whole of it by heart, and which had been reduced to writing at the dictation of the Holy Prophet himself as the revelation was received from time to time more specially when the task of compilation was committed to the care of a person who was himself one of the recorders of the Quran and had committed the whole of it to memory? Had the compiled volume contained a single variation from the text as dictated by the Holy Prophet and as committed to memory under his supervision by a large number of people, it would at once have been detected and set right. The authenticity and accuracy of the text of the Quran are thus established on the surest and most irrefutable evidence. The accuracy of the text of no other writing in the world is so far above the possibility of doubt as that of the Quran.

### **Standardized Copies of the Quran**

During the time of ‘Uthmān complaints began to be received that different tribes enunciated certain words of the Quran in their own peculiar manner and that as a result of this non-Muslims who heard these words differently enunciated fell into the misconception that there were variations in the text of the Quran. It has already been explained that these variations were the result of tribal or family practice and had nothing whatsoever to do with any variation in the text nor did they affect the meaning of any word. Nevertheless, ‘Uthmān thought it wise to forbid all variations even of enunciation of vowel points. He had copies prepared of the text which had been collected in the time of Abū Bakr and despatched these copies into different parts of the Muslim dominions and issued a direction that no variation in the recitation of the Quran from the standard text, even if it was only in the matter of enunciation of vowel points, should be permitted. In the time of the Holy Prophet the social life of the Arabs was based upon their



tribal divisions; each tribe led an existence separate from and independent of the others. In their speech they were accustomed to pronounce certain words in accordance with their own practice. When they accepted Islam they were welded into one cultured society and Arabic at once became the vehicle of that culture. Literacy spread very rapidly among the Arabs and it became quite easy for every one of them to adopt the correct literary enunciation of every Arabic word. The language of Mecca became the standard for this purpose. By the time of ‘Uthmān, therefore, no justification had been left for variations in the enunciation of vowel points in accordance with tribal practices in the recitation of the Quran, particularly when such variations were likely to lead to misconceptions in the minds of non-Arabs. ‘Uthmān’s very prudent and timely action has been made the basis of the charge by non-Muslim writers that he made changes in the Quran or that the copies of the Quran promulgated by him were in some manner different from the standard text or the text as revealed to the Holy Prophet. These authors imagine that they have discovered a potent weapon of attack against the accuracy of the text of the Quran, but those who are acquainted with the Arabic language and with the history of the compilation of the Quran merely smile at the lack of intelligence betrayed by them.

There can thus be no room for doubt that the text of the Quran promulgated by ‘Uthmān was exactly the same as that revealed to the Holy Prophet. There is still less room for doubt that the text of the Quran has continued absolutely pure and uncorrupted since ‘Uthmān had despatched copies of the standard text to different parts of the Muslim dominions. These copies were in turn multiplied so extensively and rapidly that very soon almost every literate Muslim possessed his own copy of the Quran. It is recorded that a few years later during the struggle between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah the soldiers of the latter’s army on one occasion tied copies of the Quran to the points of their lances and proclaimed that the Quran should decide between the two opposing factions. This shows that by that time it was usual for every Muslim to possess his own copy.

### **Practice of Committing the Quran to Memory Continued**

The reciting, copying and publication of the Quran have always been regarded as acts of great spiritual merit in Islam. History tells us that great Muslim divines and even Muslim monarchs used to occupy themselves in copying out the text of the Quran. Even in a non-Arab country like India, centuries after the time of the Holy Prophet, when Muslims had in many respects adopted Hindu customs and practices, the great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb used to devote his leisure hours to the copying out of the text of the Quran. It is recorded that he had written out with his own hand seven complete copies.

The practice of committing the Quran to memory was not confined to the time of the Holy Prophet or the early Caliphs. Even after written copies of the Quran began to be multiplied and became easily available, the Quran was in each age committed to memory by large numbers of Muslims. A modest estimate is that between one hundred and two hundred thousand Muslims have learnt the Quran by heart during all periods of Muslim history and sometimes the number of such persons was very much in excess of this estimate. European writers, not being conversant with the sentiments of Muslims and the degree of love and devotion inspired by the Quran in their hearts, are reluctant to believe that the purity and accuracy of the text of the Quran should have been safeguarded by Muslims in this manner. They find that history does not record the instance of a single person who had learnt the whole of the Bible by heart and it therefore seems to them incredible that the entire text of the Quran should have been committed to memory by large numbers of people in each generation. It must be remembered, however, that it is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Quran that its language is very rhythmic and that it lends itself very easily to memorization. The eldest son of the writer, Mirzā Nasir Aḥmad, who is a B.A. (Hons) of the Punjab University and M.A. of Oxford University, had under his direction committed the whole of the Quran to memory before he started on the course of his secular studies. In a small place like Qadian, two doctors and several graduates know the Quran by heart. One of these two doctors committed the whole of the Quran to memory within the space of four or five months. The father of Sir Zafrulla Khān, Judge of the Federal Court of India, committed the Quran to memory within the space of a few months after he had attained the age of 50 years. Ḥāfiẓ Ghulām Muḥammad, who was at one time the Missionary of our Movement in Mauritius, committed the Quran to memory in the space of three months. When the writer was on Pilgrimage to Mecca, he met the grandson of Munshī Muḥammad Jamālud-Dīn Khān (who had for a number of years been Minister in Bhopal State) and he told the writer that he had succeeded in committing the Quran to memory within one month. These instances show that the text of the Quran is couched in language which lends itself easily to memorization. It has been related to the writer by very aged persons that Mirzā Gul Muḥammad, great grandfather of the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement who lived in the time of the Mughal Emperor, ‘Ālamgīr II, used to maintain five hundred people at his court who knew the whole of the Quran by heart. Mirzā Gul Muḥammad was a chieftain who exercised authority over only 250 square miles of territory. In some parts of India, which is a country where the Arabic language is not widely understood, it has been the practice of a majority of Muslims through the centuries to commit the Quran to memory.

One of the devices adopted by Muslims for safeguarding the purity of the text of the Quran and one which has been acted upon for centuries is that children who are born blind or who lose their sight during infancy are encouraged to commit the Quran to memory. This is done out of a feeling that as a blind person is not competent to adopt a normal occupation, he can turn his handicap to account by becoming a guardian of the text of the Quran. This practice is so common that in India a blind Muslim is indiscriminately given the courtesy-title of Ḥāfiẓ (i.e. the guardian) meaning a person who has become the guardian of the text of the Quran by committing it to memory.

During the month of Ramadan the whole of the Quran is recited aloud in the course of congregational prayers in all the principal mosques throughout the world. The Imām recites the Quran and another Ḥāfiẓ stands immediately behind him and keeps watch over the accuracy of the recitation, prompting the Imām when necessary. In this manner the whole of the Quran is recited from memory during the month of Ramadan in hundreds and thousands of mosques all over the world.

These are the various devices and precautions adopted by Muslims to safeguard the purity and accuracy of the text of the Quran, with the result that even the bitterest enemies of Islam have had to admit that the text of the Quran has been fully safeguarded since the time of the Holy Prophet. It can, therefore, be asserted with the utmost confidence that the Quran exists today exactly as the Holy Prophet gave it to the world. We set out below the testimony of some Western writers in this behalf:

Sir William Muir in his work, "The Life of Mahomet", (p. xxviii) sums up his conclusion on this matter as follows: "What we have, though possibly corrected by himself, is still his own..." "We may, upon the strongest presumption, affirm that every verse in the Quran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Mohammad himself" (p. xxviii). "There is otherwise every security, internal and external, that we possess the text which Mohammad himself gave forth and used" (p. xxvii). And again, "...and conclude with at least a close approximation to the verdict of Von Hammer that we hold the Quran to be as surely Mohammad's word as the Mohammadans hold it to be the word of God" (p. xxviii).

Nöldeke says: "Slight clerical errors there may have been, but the Quran of 'Uthmān contains none but genuine elements, though sometimes in very strange order. The efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Quran have failed" (Enc. Brit. 9th edition, under the word "Quran").

### **Arrangement of Chapters and Verses**

It is sometimes asserted that the arrangement of the chapters of the Quran

is the work of ‘Uthmān. This is not correct. It is well known that the Holy Prophet used to recite the whole of the Quran in Ramadan and some of his Companions also did so. It is also mentioned in the traditions that the Holy Prophet used to recite the whole of the Quran to the angel Gabriel during the month of Ramadan (*Bukhārī*). A non-Muslim may not be prepared to accept this last statement, but it is beyond doubt that the Holy Prophet used to recite the Quran and he must have done it in accordance with some arrangement.

After the Holy Prophet’s death ‘Alī did not call on Abū Bakr (who had been elected Caliph) for sometime. Abū Bakr sent for him and asked him whether he was displeased with his election as Caliph. ‘Alī replied that it was not so, but that he had been busy in copying out the Quran in the order in which it had been revealed, as he had resolved at the time of the death of the Prophet that he would undertake this duty. This also shows that in the time of the Holy Prophet the Quran used to be recited in a certain order and that that order was different from the order in which it had been revealed. That is why ‘Alī decided that he should copy it out in the order in which it had been revealed so that for purposes of history that arrangement should also be preserved. There are traditions which relate that whenever a verse or group of verses was revealed to the Holy Prophet, he would send for one of the recorders and direct him to record the verse or verses indicating at the same time to which chapter and where they belonged. This shows that at the time of receiving a revelation the Holy Prophet was also informed where the revealed verse or verses belonged.

The strongest evidence, however, in support of the arrangement adopted in the compilation of the Quran is the evidence of the subject matter itself. A study of the Quran reveals that the subject matter of each chapter is connected with the subject matter of the preceding and the following chapters. If the current arrangement was adopted by ‘Uthmān merely with reference to the length of each chapter, how is it that the arrangement reveals a continuity of topics and subject matter? For instance, the *Sūrah* Al-Fātiḥah was revealed in Mecca and is the opening chapter of the Quran. The *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah was revealed at Medina and follows immediately after the *Sūrah* Al-Fātiḥah, leaving out several chapters that had been revealed during the interval. Western writers allege that the *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah has been placed first as it is the longest chapter of the Quran. To begin with, they forget that the first chapter in the Quran is not the *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah but the *Sūrah* Al-Fātiḥah, which is a very short *Sūrah* comprising only seven verses. Further, when we read the *Sūrah* Al-Fātiḥah we find that it concludes with the prayer "Guide us in the right path", and the *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah, which is the immediately succeeding chapter, opens with the verse: "This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous." If the *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah was

selected to follow after the *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah* merely by reason of the fact that it is the longest chapter of the Quran, how is it that its very opening verse furnishes an answer to the concluding verse of the immediately preceding chapter, the *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah*. The *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah* concludes with a prayer for guidance and the *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* opens with a verse which points to the guidance which had been prayed for at the end of the previous chapter. This is not a mere coincidence; for, this continuity of topics and subject matter is to be found throughout the Quran in spite of the fact that sometimes a chapter revealed at Mecca follows one revealed at Medina and vice versa. This proves that the arrangement of the chapters and the verses of the Quran was adopted under divine direction.

The question then arises why the arrangement adopted in the compilation of the Quran was different from the order in which its verses were revealed. The answer is that when the Quran was being revealed, the teachings and doctrines contained in it were entirely novel and unfamiliar to Arabs. Their minds had to be familiarized and impregnated with the background of Islamic doctrines and teachings so as to prepare them for the reception of the details of those teachings and doctrines. The earlier revelations were, therefore, cast in the form of brief chapters containing fundamental teachings like the Unity of God, kindness and consideration towards the poor, the necessity for and the benefits to be derived from the worship of God and His remembrance, and also prophecies indicating what kind of opposition the Holy Prophet would have to encounter, how Muslims would be treated, how Islam would progress, and what the end of its enemies and opponents would be. As the number of Muslims increased and Islam began to spread, the details of the Islamic Law and teachings also began to be revealed. The order in which the Quran was revealed was, therefore, best suited to the needs of the times in which it was revealed, but once the revelation was complete and hundreds of thousands of people had accepted it and even the non-Muslims had become aware of its background, it became necessary to present its teachings and doctrines to Muslims and non-Muslims from a fresh angle. To meet this need the Holy Prophet went on giving directions under divine guidance regarding the permanent arrangement of the Quran for use in the future. It is indeed an outstanding miracle of the Quran that it was revealed in the order which was best suited for the needs of the period during which it was revealed and was arranged for permanent use in the order which was best suited for the needs of Muslims in subsequent times. For a Book to be revealed in fragments over a period of 23 years in an order best suited to the requirements of that period and simultaneously to be cast into a shape best suited for the requirements of future ages was an achievement which could have been accomplished only under divine direction.

The connection subsisting between the subject matter of one chapter and that of a succeeding chapter has been explained in the preliminary note set out in the beginning of each chapter.

### **Some Prophecies of the Quran**

It has been explained in the earlier portion of this General Introduction that Scriptures revealed before the Quran contained prophecies relating to the Quran. Western writers have alleged that the Quran itself contains no prophecies. This is not correct. The very first revelation received by the Holy Prophet in Hīrā Cave contains the prophecy that through the Quran knowledge would be vouchsafed to man to which he had not had access before. Consequently, we find several instances where the Quran points out errors which had crept into previous Scriptures and in these respects the Quran has subsequently been confirmed by events. For instance, it was revealed in the Quran that when Pharaoh was drowned his body was saved and was preserved so that it should serve as a Sign for future generations. God says in the Quran:

And We brought the children of Israel across the sea; and Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them wrongfully and aggressively, till, when the calamity of drowning overtook him, he said, "I believe that there is no god but He in Whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit to Him." "What! now! while thou wast disobedient before this and wast of those who create disorder. So this day We will save thee in thy body alone that thou mayest be a Sign to those who come after thee." And surely many of mankind are heedless of Our Signs (10:91-93).

That is to say: God carried the Israelites in safety across the sea and they were pursued by Pharaoh and his army out of enmity and transgression; and the latter continued in their pursuit till they were overtaken by drowning. And at that moment Pharaoh said: 'I now believe that there is no God save the One in Whom the Israelites believe and I submit myself to Him.' Thereupon God decreed, 'Thou dost declare thy belief now whereas thou didst indulge in disobedience and transgression before. In return for thy last-moment declaration of belief We shall save only thy body from destruction so that it should serve as a sign for coming generations, though in truth the majority of mankind pay little heed to Our signs.' This incident is not described in the Bible or in any Jewish history or in any other authentic record of that period. The Quran made mention of it over 13 and a half centuries ago. Thirteen centuries thereafter the body of this particular Pharaoh was discovered and identified which established beyond controversy the fact that after he was

drowned his dead body was recovered and was embalmed and preserved. In spite of its having been embalmed it could have been destroyed during the many convulsions through which the land of Egypt had passed after the time of Moses but it escaped destruction and was preserved to serve as a sign and a lesson to mankind and to confirm the truth of the Quran.

Again, the very early revelations contain the verse: "By the night when it spreads" (92:2), which means that God calls to witness the night to point to the fact that Islam would be subjected to a succession of severe trials and persecutions. This prophecy was made at a time when even the Holy Prophet himself did not apprehend that his people would put up a severe opposition to his Mission. Immediately after he had received the first revelation, Khadijah took the Holy Prophet to her cousin, Waraqah bin Naufal. After the Holy Prophet had related his recent experience to him, Waraqah said: "The angel that brought the revelation to Moses has also descended upon you. I fear, however, that your people will persecute you and expel you from Mecca." The Prophet was very much struck by this and asked in great surprise: "Will my people indeed expel me.?" (*Bukhārī*). He knew that he was a great favourite with his people and did not apprehend that he would be opposed by them. At that very time, however, God informed him that Islam and the Muslims would have to pass through a very dark night of opposition and persecution. That night soon commenced and lasted through ten weary years.

That this period of persecution and trial would extend over ten years was also foretold in another place in the Quran. In the opening verses of *Sūrah Al-Fajr* God calls to witness the ten nights which will precede the dawn. Sir William Muir and other Western writers agree that this *Sūrah* was revealed towards the close of the third year of the Prophet's Ministry. Up to that time opposition by the people of Mecca had not taken on a severe complexion. At that time the Quran gave a warning that Muslims would have to pass through ten dark nights of persecution. Those who are familiar with the phraseology of sacred scriptures are aware that a day or a night often signifies a year. The Bible contains many instances of this, though it employs the expression "a day" to indicate a year while the Quran when indicating a period of distress employs the word "night", for a period of distress is a period of darkness and is signified more properly by "night". This verse gave warning of severe trials and persecutions which would last for a period of ten years. That period commenced almost immediately after this verse was revealed and continued for ten years. A hostile critic might suggest that at the time when this verse was revealed the Holy Prophet could well have anticipated that the Meccans would soon convert their opposition into persecution; but were there any means, apart from divine revelation, by which he could have ascertained that the period of persecution would continue for ten years and not for five or for

eight or for twelve or for thirteen? The revelation specified ten years and the Holy Prophet was permitted to remain in Mecca for only ten years after this revelation was received and was subjected to persecution throughout that period. After ten years, he was compelled to depart from Mecca which had nothing but persecution to offer to him and his followers and he arrived at Medina where God made provision for the rapid progress of Islam and of Muslims and his departure from Mecca thus became the dawn of Islam's spread and progress.

It might be suggested that the period of ten years was an intelligent guess on the part of the Holy Prophet, but was it also an intelligent guess on his part that ten years after the revelation was received a large number of the people of Medina would accept Islam and that he would migrate to that town? Was it left to his option to convert the people of Medina to Islam and was it left to his option to accomplish the journey from Mecca to Medina in safety?

But the revelation did not end there. It went on to say: "And the night when it passes away" (89:5). In this verse God calls to witness another night with which the darkness will depart, meaning that after the dawn which would appear at the end of ten years of persecution the darkness would not disappear altogether but that the dawn would be followed by another night and that thereafter there would be no further period of darkness. This is exactly what happened. The Migration from Mecca was followed by another year of alarm and distress when Muslims in Medina were in continuous dread of being invaded by the Meccans. The Battle of Badr was fought about one year after the Prophet's Migration from Mecca and this battle, as had been foretold in the Bible and as we have already stated in the earlier part of this Introduction, laid low the glory of Kedar and brought to an end the whole series of persecutions of Muslims by Meccans. The Muslims had to fight other and greater battles later, but the Battle of Badr established them as an independent and sovereign people and swept into the common pit of ruin and destruction the leading men of the Quraish, who had been prominent persecutors of Muslims.

Again, while the Prophet was still in Mecca he received the revelation:

Verily He Who has prescribed the teachings of the Quran for thee will bring thee back to the ordained place of return (28:86).

The verse means to say that God Who has revealed the Quran to the Prophet and has imposed upon him the duty of obedience to it guarantees that He will restore him once more to Mecca. This verse not only revealed that the Holy Prophet would have to migrate from Mecca but also contained the prophecy that after his Migration he would return to Mecca as a victor. Nobody passing through the circumstances which surrounded the Holy Prophet at the time when this verse was revealed could have guessed that after



he had been forced to depart from Mecca he would return to it in triumph. There is another prophecy in the Quran foretelling the same event and that was also revealed while the Prophet was still at Mecca:

And say, "O my, Lord, make my entry a good entry, and then make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power" (17:81).

In this verse God commanded the Prophet to pray that He should make his entry (into the town to which He was sending him) a successful entry and thereafter enable him to issue forth therefrom with success to deliver his attack and be his Ally in that attack. This verse foretold that the Prophet would migrate from Mecca to Medina and that he would invade Mecca from Medina and that Mecca would eventually submit to him.

Again, while the Prophet was still in Mecca he received the revelation to the effect that the hour of the victory of Islam was approaching and that the moon would be rent (54:2). The moon was the symbol of Arab power and the rending of the moon meant that the Arab power was about to be shattered. This verse was revealed at a time when the Muslims had been compelled to migrate in different directions and the Holy Prophet was persecuted in Mecca and was not permitted even to say his prayers in the Ka'bah. On one occasion when he wanted to say his prayers there, he was ignominiously dragged from its precincts. At that time when the whole of Mecca was afire with opposition to him, the Holy Prophet informed the Meccans that God had decreed that their power would be broken and that the victory of Islam was drawing near. Within a few years, this prophecy was fulfilled in the clearest possible manner. In the Battle of Badr the vaunted power and glory of Kedar was broken and the banner of Islam was planted firmly forever. The moon was indeed rent. That day was the Day of Judgement for the Arabs. On that day a new heaven and a new earth were created.

While Islam and the Muslims were still the targets of Arab persecution in Mecca, news arrived that the Persians had vanquished the Romans in battle. This occasioned great rejoicing among Meccans, for the Persians were idolaters and the Romans were Christians. The Meccans took the victory of the Persians as a good omen indicating their own ultimate triumph over Muslims. On this occasion the Holy Prophet received the revelation that the Romans had been vanquished in a neighbouring land but within nine years of their defeat they would again be victorious (30:3-5); the word occurring in the verse, viz. *بضع* expresses a number from three to nine. When this revelation was announced among the Meccans they laughed and jeered at the Muslims. Some of them laid a wager of a hundred camels with Abū Bakr that the prophecy would not be fulfilled. Events indicated that there was very little chance of the Romans defeating the Persians as their defeat in Syria was

followed by further victories of the Persians and the Roman army was pushed back by stages to the shores of the Sea of Marmora. Constantinople was cut off from its Eastern dominions and the Roman Empire was reduced to the size of a small State. The word of God was, however, bound to be fulfilled and was fulfilled. The Romans, though smaller in number and not so well equipped as the Persians, won a complete victory and the Persians were put to flight. They retreated into Persia and the Romans reoccupied their Asiatic and African possessions.

The Quran contains several prophecies relating to later times, some of which have already been fulfilled. For instance, at one place it says:

He has let loose the two bodies of water, which will meet one day.  
Between them is a barrier; they encroach not one upon the other...There come out from them pearls and coral...And His are the lofty ships upon the sea, looking like mountains (55:20, 21, 23, 25).

These verses purport to say that two oceans from which pearls and coral are recovered and which are separated would meet each other and high-prowed vessels would pass through them. This prophecy was fulfilled by the construction of the Suez and the Panama Canals. The oceans that were joined together by these canals are well known for their pearl fisheries and coral.

The *Sūrah* Al-Kahf contains prophecies relating to the rise and progress of the Christian nations, their naval might and hegemony over the greater part of the earth and their mutual wars. The ultimate victory and triumph of Islam have also been foretold. The greater part of the prophecies regarding the rise and fall of the Christian nations has been fulfilled. The next stage is the fulfilment of the prophecy relating to the victory and triumph of Islam. A European Christian or a European atheist, judging only from the present condition of Muslims, would laugh at this; but the God Who revealed these prophecies and Who has fulfilled those of them that related to the Christian nations will surely cause the prophecy relating to the triumph of Islam to be fulfilled also. The days of the victory of Islam are at hand. The rays of the sun of Islam are penetrating the thick curtains of darkness. God's angels are descending from the Heavens. The earth is no doubt in the grip of satanic powers but the days of the clear triumph of divine forces against the forces of Satan are rapidly drawing near. The Unity of God will then be firmly established and mankind will realize and admit that the Quran alone is capable of making peace between God and man and of establishing justice and fair dealing between man and man and of setting up the Kingdom of God upon earth.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF THE QURANIC TEACHINGS

One special feature that distinguishes the Quran from all other Scriptures is that it deals adequately with all problems arising within the sphere of religion and by stressing the function of religion, it directs attention to its proper sphere and the benefits that may be derived from it. A reader of the Old and the New Testaments or of the Vedas or of the Zend Avesta is left with the impression that somebody appearing at an intermediate stage in the middle of a long drawn-out phenomenon of nature had set out to describe those stages of it of which he had been a witness. That is not the case with the Quran. It expounds the philosophy of creation and all matters connected therewith. It explains why God created the universe and the object of man's creation and the means to be adopted for the achievement of that object. It sheds light on the nature of the godhead and His attributes and the manner in which those attributes find their manifestation. In connection with the object of man's creation, it expounds the laws on which the running of the universe is based. It points out that for the physical development and evolution of man God has put into force the laws of nature which regulate the physical and mental conditions of man and that one group of angels is entrusted with the enforcement of these laws. For the development and enlightenment of the human soul God has revealed the Law of Sharī'ah (i.e. Sacred Law) through His Prophets. In some cases the revelation, containing the Sacred Law has been limited in character but there has also been the revelation containing the complete and perfect code of the Sacred Law. In other cases the object of the revelation has been to restore the Sacred Law to its original purity after it had suffered from human misinterpretation. In other words, God raises Prophets among mankind with different objects. Some Prophets are Law-bearers, and through them a new dispensation is revealed. The function of others is limited to the modification of an already revealed law while still others are entrusted with the duty of sweeping away misinterpretations of the law. The Quran also explains the need for, and the benefits to be derived from, the Law of Sharī'ah and its function in relation to the evolution of man.

## Belief in a Living God

The Quran points out the distinction between God and His attributes, appreciation of which enables us to judge the error of those who have said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Quran teaches that an attribute cannot become the substitute of the being and that the two are entirely distinct.

The Quran explains to what extent man is left free to determine his course of action and to what extent he is subject to compulsion. It teaches that man has been left with enough choice to make him responsible for his actions to God and to enable him to embark upon a continuous course of self-improvement. On the other hand, the sphere of his activities is circumscribed and it is not possible for him to transgress its limits. Despite all effort, it is not possible for man to discard the limitations to which human life is subject. He cannot sink into a condition of static solidity nor climb to an ethereal existence. Within his own sphere, however, he possesses great faculties and large powers and is capable of continuous improvement and progress.

The Quran explains the need of belief in God and draws attention to the proofs of His existence. It emphasizes that God has always sent down His word by means of revelation in times of darkness and that He manifests His power through extraordinary Signs and thus gives irrefutable proof of His existence. The Prophets and their perfect followers are indispensable for the purpose of creating in men's minds perfect faith in God. If God were to cease to manifest His attributes through the Prophets and their followers, mankind would become a prey to doubt and uncertainty and firm faith in the existence of God would disappear. It is imperative, therefore, that so long as mankind continue to exist, divine revelation should continue to descend upon some of them. Faith in the existence of God can be maintained only through this means. From the inception of the universe, God has spoken to man through His Prophets down to Jesus and on to the Holy Prophet of Islam, just as He has throughout continued to manifest His attributes of creation, hearing and seeing. In the same manner He will continue to speak till the end of time to His chosen servants and will continue to manifest His existence by these means. Reason revolts against the suggestion that God exercised His attribute of speech up to the time of Jesus but became silent thereafter or that He exercised this attribute up to the time of the Holy Prophet and thereafter became dumb forever. As we repudiate as blasphemous any suggestion that God possessed the attribute of seeing up to the time of Jesus or up to the time of the Holy Prophet but that thereafter He ceased to see or that He was capable of creating up to the time of Jesus or up to the time of the Holy Prophet but that thereafter He lost the attribute of creation or that He was All-Powerful up to the time of Jesus or the Holy Prophet but thereafter He ceased to have any power, so we must repudiate the suggestion that God spoke up to any particular period and thereafter ceased to speak. All His attributes are perfect and everlasting. This is a self-evident truth, yet Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and a very large majority of those who call themselves Muslims have come to believe that revelation came to an end with Zoroaster or with the Prophets of Israel or with Jesus or with the Holy Prophet. The Quran utterly

rejects such a notion. The Quran teaches belief in a living God and puts forward as proof the fact that He will continue ever to speak to His chosen and righteous servants as He has always spoken to them. The truth of this doctrine taught by the Quran has been confirmed in this age by the appearance of the Promised Messiah, the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. Once more the revelation received by him and by his true followers stands out as a challenge to all those who assert, if not by word of mouth, at least by the doctrines they preach, that God has lost His attribute of speech.

The Quran teaches that divine revelation has not been confined to any particular people but that God has raised Prophets among all peoples. It explains why it was necessary to send Prophets one after the other; why a perfect Law was not revealed in the early stages of man's history. It deals at length with the subject of the Unity of God and sets out convincing proofs in support of it. It demonstrates that a plurality of gods would offend both against reason and against fact. It explains in what manner the doctrine of the Unity of God helps man in his spiritual advance.

The Quran sheds a flood of light on the question of prophethood. The word "prophet" or its equivalents have been freely used in religious scriptures but not one of them explains the conception underlying prophethood. Who may be called a Prophet and who may not be so called and what are the different kinds of prophethood? The Quran alone defines a Prophet and draws a distinction between different kinds of prophethood. It explains the difference between a Prophet and a non-prophet and defines the duties of a Prophet and a Prophet's relationship to God. It also explains why Prophets are raised and what should be the relationship between them and their followers and between them and those who do not believe in them. It defines the rights of a Prophet and explains whether a Prophet stands as a barrier between God and man or is only a helper and a guide.

The Quran deals in detail with the subject of angels, their functions and the purpose for which they have been created.

It also explains what Satan is and in what manner the existence of such a being is of help to man. What is the relationship between man and Satan? How can a man guard himself against satanic promptings? Has Satan power to force a man to adopt a particular course of action? It points out that angels ever prompt a man to good and Satan ever prompts him to evil and that man has the option to accept or reject the good promptings of angels and equally to accept or reject the evil promptings of Satan. These two categories of beings have been created to help man towards perfection and to invest his existence with reality. In the absence of angelic and satanic promptings man would not be entitled to any reward nor would he deserve any punishment. A man's fight against satanic suggestions makes him worthy of reward and opens the way of

progress to him; his turning away from angelic suggestions and promptings makes him liable to punishment.

The Quran expounds the philosophy of prayer and points out how one ought to pray, under what circumstances prayers may be accepted and what kind of prayers may not be accepted and what is the sphere within which prayer operates.

It discusses good and evil and defines both and explains where their boundaries meet. It defines absolute good and absolute evil and relative good and relative evil. It points out the way of acquiring high moral qualities and goodness and how evil may be avoided. It sheds light on the sources of good and evil and teaches man to clean out the source of evil.

It treats of repentance and explains what true repentance means. It enumerates the benefits to be derived from repentance, explains the requisites of true repentance and when repentance may be resorted to. It also explains the principles upon which rewards and penalties are based and the factors to which regard is had in adjudging them. It explains the relationship between transgression and punishment and how they ought to be adjusted to each other.

### **The Quranic Conception of Salvation**

The Quran explains what salvation is and how it is attained. It teaches that salvation is of three kinds: (1) Perfect; (2) Imperfect; and (3) Deferred. Perfect salvation is attained in this very life. A person who attains imperfect salvation in this life gradually perfects the means of attaining salvation after death. Deferred salvation is attained only after suffering for a period the punishment of Hell. The teachings of Christianity and Islam with respect to this last kind of salvation have one feature of resemblance but are at variance with each other in a fundamental respect. Christianity teaches that even this kind of salvation can be achieved only by those who believe firmly in the doctrines of Christianity but who may have failed to attain perfect salvation in this life. These are the people who, after passing for a period through the torments of Hell, would attain perfect salvation. Islam, on the other hand, teaches that every human being has been created with the purpose that he or she will ultimately attain perfect salvation. The most rabid disbeliever and wrongdoer after being subjected to certain kinds of reformatory treatment, one of which is the torment of Hell, would ultimately attain salvation and would enter Paradise. In this connection the Quran emphasizes the doctrine of weighing and balancing of actions. It teaches that the preponderance of good actions in a man's life is proof of sincere effort on his part to attain salvation and that a person who dies while making a sincere effort to attain an object is like a soldier who is killed before victory is achieved. Death is controlled entirely by God. A soldier on the field of battle has no power to postpone it till

after victory is achieved. In the same way a person who is struggling sincerely to attain salvation has no power to postpone death till his struggle ends in victory. If such a person dies in the middle of this struggle, he becomes deserving of the grace and mercy of God and not of His wrath and punishment. No nation has ever condemned its warriors for being killed before victory was achieved. Every soldier who sincerely strives for victory is honoured. The same is the case with a person who strives to overcome Satan and, in spite of ups and downs, continues to sustain the struggle steadfastly and with courage till the end so that God's kingdom may be established. According to the Quran such a person is certainly deserving of salvation. His weakness is not a blemish but an ornament, for he was not thereby deterred from joining the ranks of those fighting on the side of God and did not hesitate to sacrifice himself in the struggle.

The Quran describes the stages of spiritual evolution and explains their number and details. For instance, it explains the kinds and degrees of purity, chastity, charity, truthfulness, mercy, kind treatment, etc. Thus, it enables a man to plan in accordance with his moral and spiritual development. By thus placing the immediate objective within a man's reach it encourages him to set out on the path of progress, and by setting out before him a series of ever-higher objectives it incites him to greater effort at each stage. It thus carries man forward on the path of progress step by step and stage by stage.

The Quran sheds light on man's intellectual evolution also and explains how it is carried out and teaches that divine wisdom in judging of a man's actions takes into account his intellectual development. He who was fortunate enough to be nurtured in a favourable environment and for whom the path of virtue was made easy may be judged by a standard different from that applied to a person whose intellectual development was inferior to the former and whose environment was not so favourable. Allowance would be made for the latter in respect of the handicaps against which he had to struggle.

The Quran explains what faith is; how it may be acquired, and how it may be known. It explains the need of the Law of Shari'ah and its philosophy. It teaches that God's Law is based upon wisdom and is designed to help man forward on the path of progress. God's commandments are not devised as a burden or a penalty for His servants but each of them is designed as an aid and a prop to man in his progress and to help to improve his social environment. The Quran does not support the doctrine of the compulsory imposition of commandments and penalties. It teaches that God condemns no person without taking into full account every circumstance that might excuse or palliate his conduct. It also teaches that no man may be condemned unless he has had due warning in advance.

## Miracles

Christian writers have asserted that, apart from the claim that it is unique in its language and its philosophy, the Quran does not prefer any claim to miracles. It is necessary to explain in a few words the attitude of the Quran towards miracles.

The Quran puts forward two fundamental doctrines. First, that there are certain divine laws which are not subject to variation. For instance, the Quran teaches that a dead person never comes back to life upon this earth, and that nobody except God possesses the power of creation. The world may produce artificers, technicians and inventors but the attribute of creation manifests itself only through the work of God. As regards the first of these two matters God says in the Quran:

Until, when death comes to one of them, he says entreating, "My Lord, send me back, that I may do righteous deeds in the life which I have left behind". By no means, it is but a mere word that he utters. And behind them is a barrier until the day when they shall be raised again (23:100, 101).

Again; it says:

And it is an inviolable law for a township which We have destroyed that they shall not return. It shall be so even when Gog and Magog are let loose and they shall hasten forth from every height (21:96, 97).

The verses mean to say that God has decreed that the people that have passed away shall not return to the earth till Gog and Magog are released and spread over the earth from the summit of every hill and the top of every wave. This shows clearly that the dead cannot return to the earth. The reference to Gog and Magog in the last verse does not mean that the dead would be permitted to return to the earth at that time. As the release of Gog and Magog is one of the signs of the approach of the end of days, the verse means that this law will continue to operate till the end of days. Some grammarians have interpreted this part of the verse to mean that after the rise of Gog and Magog attempts would be made to resuscitate the dead but that these attempts would not be successful, meaning that science would make unsuccessful efforts to solve the riddle of death. In short, the Quran teaches that a dead person cannot be permitted to return to the earth.

It also teaches that nobody except God possesses the power to create. It says:

And those on whom they call beside Allah create not anything, but they are themselves created. They are dead, not living; and they know not when they will be raised (16:21, 22).



The Quran also teaches that since wisdom is one of the attributes of God, nothing may be attributed to Him which is contrary to wisdom. God is referred to as The Wise at several places in the Quran. At one place it says:

What has happened to you that you expect not wisdom and staidness from Allah (71:14).

In this verse God reprimands the disbelievers saying that while they claim that all their actions are based upon wisdom, they do not make the same presumption with respect to God and attribute to Him things that are contrary to wisdom.

It follows therefore that if anything contravening any of these three laws, that have been cited as instances, is alleged to have occurred at any time, the Quran would reject it whether such occurrences are described as miracles or mysteries or magic. The Quran does not admit the possibility of any such occurrence and does not attribute any such miracle to any of the Prophets, nor does it claim any such miracle on behalf of the Holy Prophet himself. It is not to be thought of any reasonable person that he would first make a law or prescribe a rule and then himself proceed to contravene it. How is it possible then to think that God, Who is Perfect Wisdom, would act in that manner? He who attributes things like this to the righteous Prophets of God in no way adds to the respect and honour in which they should be held but is guilty of an attack upon their intelligence and integrity. It is the duty therefore of every right-thinking person to refute allegations of this kind as they amount not to praise but to defamation of the persons concerning whom they are made.

The Quran, on the other hand, not only does not deny but positively claims that God makes His Prophets the means of certain kinds of manifestations which do not in any manner contravene His fundamental laws. This is a truth which cannot be controverted and this is the kind of miracle that the Quran claims for the Holy Prophet. Is it not a miracle that God should vouchsafe to a human being the sure knowledge of things hidden in the womb of the future? Is it not a miracle for God to bestow success and victory upon a weak and humble person not possessed of any visible means against strong, powerful and numerous opponents? The Quran claims not only that it is unique in itself but also that God bestowed upon the Holy Prophet the knowledge of things hidden and that He constantly manifested His power and glory in support of the Holy Prophet. How can it then be said that the Quran does not attribute any miracles to the Holy Prophet? In truth it makes that claim repeatedly. Was it not a miracle that the Holy Prophet was warned of severe opposition and persecution on the part of the Meccans when he himself had no reason to suspect that he would become the object of such opposition and persecution? Was it not a miracle that he was informed that he would

have to migrate from Mecca and that even the time of the migration was indicated in advance? Was it not a miracle that several years before the Battle of Badr he was informed that such a conflict would take place in which the Muslims would be victorious and their enemies would be vanquished and that even the time of the conflict was specified? Was it not a miracle that the Holy Prophet was informed years before the event not only that he would have to migrate from Mecca but also that he would re-enter Mecca as a victor? Was it not a miracle that after the defeat of the Romans by the Persians in Syria the Holy Prophet was informed that within nine years the Romans would vanquish the Persians? Was it not a miracle that the Holy Prophet was told that Islam would spread throughout Arabia and would then prevail against all other Faiths? When every one of these events came to pass at its appointed time, what doubt could there have been left that every one of them constituted a miracle? All these matters and many others of a similar kind are narrated in the Quran. Then how can it be said that the Quran disclaims miracles on the part of the Holy Prophet? Those who are responsible for this assertion have been misled into making it on account of their lack of knowledge of the Arabic language and idiom and the style of the Quran. Where, for instance, the Quran says: "And nothing could hinder Us from sending Signs, except that the former people rejected them" (17:60), it does not mean, as Christian writers appear to have apprehended, that God declines to show any further Signs. The verse means that people for whose benefit Signs were shown in previous ages did not accept them and this might have been a reason for showing no further Signs, but God would not cease to manifest His Signs on that account. The people rejected the Signs shown by the earlier Prophets and yet Signs were shown in support of later Prophets; thus there was no reason why Signs should not have been shown in support of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Again, when in answer to the demands of disbelievers the Holy Prophet was directed in the Quran to say that he was but a human being like unto others, it did not mean that God did not show Signs in his support. All that was meant was that Signs were shown by God and that the Holy Prophet could not produce them at his will. This is a fundamental truth and the statement of it by the Quran enhances our appreciation of it. Which of the two persons is a follower of the truth and which of them is in error: he who affirms that God had handed over His attributes and authority to some of His creatures or he who proclaims that he is but a creature of God and that God makes His Signs manifest through His beloved servants?

In addition to prophecies the Quran makes mention of other miracles also. For instance, it refers to the following miracle. On the occasion of the Migration the Holy Prophet, accompanied by Abū Bakr, left Mecca and took refuge in Thaur Cave, three miles from Mecca. When the Meccans discovered

that the Holy Prophet had slipped through their fingers, they procured their best tracker and tracked him up to the mouth of the cave. The Quran makes mention of the fact that, perceiving that the tracking party had arrived at the mouth of the cave, Abū Bakr was afraid lest on discovering him they should do injury to the Holy Prophet. But the latter said, 'Grieve not, for Allah is with us' (9:40), meaning that their enemies would not succeed in capturing them. Was not what followed on that occasion a peerless miracle indeed? Two men utterly bereft of all earthly support fly from the concerted vengeance of their enemies and take refuge in a cave. When it is discovered that they have slipped out of the town in the darkness of the night, their enemies are filled with anger and dismay. They feel that the escape of the fugitives would not only cheat them of their prey but would inflict everlasting humiliation and disgrace upon them. They proclaim a reward of 100 camels for whomsoever should capture and produce before them the principal fugitive, dead or alive. They then procure their best tracker who leads them to the mouth of the cave in which the two have concealed themselves and confidently asserts that the tracks lead no further. The tracking party are afire with the thirst for vengeance and are determined to leave no chance of escape to the runaways. After a pursuit extending over three miles they arrive within a few feet of their quarry and have only to look down and to peep into the cave which opens at their feet to discover the whereabouts of those whom they seek, but God exercises such control over their intelligence and their eyes that nobody cares to look into the cave and they return foiled and disappointed. Has the world ever witnessed a grander miracle than this?

Again, with reference to the Battle of Badr the Quran states that the Holy Prophet threw a handful of pebbles in the direction of the enemy and that this created confusion in their ranks (Anfāl). In the traditions this incident is described in greater detail. It appears that when the battle was at its height and the enemy was pressing the Muslims hard, the Holy Prophet took up a handful of pebbles and threw them in the direction of the enemy saying: "May their faces be deformed" (*Ṭabarī* and *Zurqānī*). Simultaneously, God caused a fierce wind to blow from the direction of the Muslims towards the Meccans which whipped up the sand and threw it into the faces and the eyes of the latter. The result was that the Meccans could not see clearly and it became difficult for them to aim their arrows accurately. The force of the opposing wind also stopped their arrows half-way. On the other hand, the Muslims had a clear view of the helpless Meccans and their arrows were carried forward by the wind with great force. This gave the small, ragged and ill-armed band of Muslims a complete victory over the very much more numerous, better mounted and better armed force of the Meccans. Was this not a miracle and does not the Quran when referring to it purport to describe it as a miracle?

The Quran does clearly ascribe miracles to the Holy Prophet and makes mention of some of them. Only, it refrains from ascribing to him such stupidities as the bringing back to physical life of persons that were truly dead or arresting the sun and the moon in their course or causing rivers to stand still or moving mountains. Accounts of occurrences like these are but fables which serve only to amuse little babies in their cradles. The Quran does not ascribe occurrences like these either to the Holy Prophet or to any other Prophet. On the other hand the Quran furnishes explanations of passages which occur in some of the older scriptures the literal construction of which has led people to believe that occurrences like those referred to above did actually take place. The Quran points out that such language was used only in a metaphorical sense and is not susceptible of literal construction.

### **Worship of God**

The Quran deals in detail with the subject of the worship of God. It divides all worship into four categories:

- (1) Worship the object of which is to strengthen man's relationship with God and to increase his love for Him.
- (2) Worship which is designed to improve man's physical condition and to incite him to make sacrifices for the sake of God.
- (3) Worship which is prescribed for the purpose of promoting concord and unity among men and to create attachment to a centre.
- (4) Worship the object of which is to bring about equitable economic adjustments within the community.

The Quran prescribes different kinds of worship under each of these categories. It teaches that worship does not merely mean that man should concentrate upon and offer homage to God but also consists in paying attention to one's fellow beings. It further emphasizes that worship is not merely individual but is also collective. A man's duty in respect of worship does not end with presenting himself before God; he must also prepare his brethren to appear before God. For this reason all the ordinances of the Quran relating to worship have a collective as well as an individual aspect.

Under the first category the Quran has prescribed the five daily services. The Islamic prayer service is very different from those prescribed in other religions. It has both an individual and a collective part and is entirely devoid of all show and ceremonial. The Quran has dispensed with the necessity of consecrated buildings like churches and temples and all formalities in the matter of the worship of God. It teaches that every portion of the earth's surface is fit to be used for the worship of God. The Holy Prophet had this in mind when he said: "The whole earth has been fashioned into a mosque for me" (*Bukhārī*). This saying of his has multifarious significance, one meaning

being that a Muslim may say his prayers where he may happen to be when the time of prayers arrives. It is not obligatory upon him to proceed to a church or a temple nor is he dependent for the performance of his worship upon the ministrations of a priest or a person in holy orders. Islam does not countenance an ordained priesthood. It regards every good man as the vicegerent of God and recognizes the competence of every such person to lead the prayers.

### **The Mosques of Islam**

Muslims make use of mosques for purposes of congregational prayers but this is not due to any feeling that the sites or buildings of these mosques possess any peculiar sanctity for the purposes of Divine worship. A mosque is built to enable the Muslims of the neighbourhood to assemble for the purpose of congregational prayers. Mosques facilitate the performance of collective worship and are used for other religious and social purposes also. No particular ceremony is required for consecrating mosques and dedicating them to the worship of God, as is the case with temples and churches. Any building that is used for the purpose of congregational prayers by the Muslims is a mosque. No structural design has been prescribed for a mosque nor is a mosque divided into naves and transepts, nor does it possess anything resembling an altar. There are no pictures or images in a mosque and no relics of saints. The Muslims gather for Divine worship in the simplest possible manner and Islamic religious services are free from all artistic and emotional distractions. There is no music or singing, no temple dances, no priestly vestments, no burning of candles and no attempt to create an emotional atmosphere by the aid of organs and incense. The light inside a mosque is not dimmed artificially to create an atmosphere of awe and no images of saints divert the attention of worshippers from God. At the appointed hour the worshippers collect in the mosque and arrange themselves in rows to indicate that, having concluded their individual worship in their homes or in the mosque, they are now ready to offer collective worship to God. They praise God and render thanks to Him and offer prayers to Him for their own spiritual, moral and physical advancement and for that of their friends and relations and of the whole of mankind. They do this in a perfectly calm atmosphere undisturbed even by the strains of music. While so engaged no worshipper may look to the right or to the left nor speak to any other worshipper. The rich and the poor stand shoulder to shoulder with each other; the king may find his shoeblack standing next to him; a judge may have as his neighbour an accused person who is on trial before him and a general may be standing next to a private. No worshipper may object to another worshipper standing next to him nor may any worshipper be moved from his station to

another. They all stand humble and subdued in the presence of God and bow and prostrate themselves and revert to the standing posture under the leadership of the Imām. During some of the services the Imām recites aloud a few verses from the Quran to impress their purport upon the minds of the whole congregation. In certain parts of the service each worshipper offers prescribed prayers or prayers of his own composition.

In addition to the prescribed services Muslims offer prayers and devote themselves silently to the remembrance of God and ponder over His attributes, whenever during the day or night they can find the opportunity of doing so. Mosques are used not solely for the purposes of congregational and individual worship but for all kinds of religious and intellectual pursuits. They serve as schools and for the celebration of marriages, as courts of law and places of meeting where plans are settled for the social and economic progress of the community.

### **The Islamic Fast**

The second form of worship which has as its principal object the physical improvement of the worshipper is fasting. The Islamic Fast differs from the fasts prescribed in other religions. A Hindu while fasting is permitted to eat certain kinds of food; the Christian Lent is also observed by abstaining from the eating of particular kinds of food, for instance, meat or leavened bread. A Muslim, however, while fasting may not eat or drink anything from dawn till after sunset. A part of the obligation attaching to the Islamic Fast is that apart from abstention from food and drink during the hours of fasting a Muslim must make special efforts throughout the month of fasting to attain to higher standards of virtue and purity. One lesson that the fast teaches is that a man who abstains from the use of permissible things during the fast should on no account indulge on any occasion in that which is prohibited. The period of the fast, that is to say, from dawn till after sunset, applies to all countries where there is an alternation of day and night during 24 hours. At the extremities of the earth where this does not hold good the period of the fast is to be determined with reference to the length of a normal day.

This form of worship is also both individual and collective. Muslims are expected to fast individually on different days during the year but during the month of Ramadan all Muslims, wherever they may be, must observe the fast.

### **The Pilgrimage**

The third form of worship prescribed by Islam is the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The object of this is to create in the minds of Muslims a feeling of attachment to a centre. For the performance of the Pilgrimage Muslims who are able to afford the journey collect together at Mecca during a prescribed period. Thus an

opportunity is afforded to them to come together from different parts of the world, to strengthen their relationship with each other and to exchange views upon national and international problems. This form of worship is also both collective and individual. The Pilgrimage may be performed only during the prescribed days, but the 'Umrah may be performed at any time. Whenever during the year a Muslim is able to make arrangements for the journey he can proceed to Mecca and perform the 'Umrah. This form of worship teaches Muslims that for the purpose of maintaining and strengthening the centre they ought to be ready to make both collective and individual sacrifices.

The fourth form of worship is alms and charity. This too is both collective and individual and both prescribed and voluntary. For instance, on the occasion of the 'Īdul-Fiṭr (the festival of the breaking of the fast) it is obligatory upon every Muslim, man and woman, adult and child, before taking part in the additional service prescribed for that day, to offer three pounds of wheat or corn or its equivalent in money as a contribution towards helping the poor. Even the poorest person is not exempt from this obligation. He who is able to afford it must make this contribution out of his own substance, but he who is not able to afford it must nevertheless provide the contribution out of that which he may receive in charity on that day.

### **The Zakāh**

Another financial obligation imposed upon Muslims is Zakāh, which is leviable from every person who possesses a certain minimum quantity of cash or goods or cattle. The incidence of the assessment varies. For instance, the rate is 10 per cent in respect of agricultural produce and 2½ per cent on commercial capital and profits. This at first sight appears discriminatory and unbalanced, but the assessment on commercial capital and profits is not so light as it appears. While the assessment on agricultural produce is levied only on produce, the assessment on commercial enterprises is levied on both capital and profits. The object is not only to provide means for the relief of the distressed and the promotion of the welfare of the economically less favoured sections of the community but also to discourage the hoarding of money and commodities and thus to ensure a brisk circulation of both, resulting in healthy economic adjustments.

The Quran expounds in detail the principles upon which human intercourse ought to be based. It stresses the need of cooperation and defines the limits of individual and collective rights and obligations. It explains the fundamentals of government and its obligations and the relationship that ought to subsist between government and people. It regulates the relationship of master and servant and lays down the principles that ought to govern international relationships.

The Quran expressly enjoins that wealth should not be permitted to accumulate in a few hands and that it ought to be kept constantly in circulation. To achieve this, it prohibits the lending of money on interest by means of which a few clever people are able to monopolize the greater part of the wealth of the community, and makes provision for the compulsory distribution of inheritance. It does not permit any person to leave the whole of his property to one out of several heirs or even to augment the share of one heir at the expense of another. It seeks to bring about equitable adjustments in the distribution of wealth through Zakāh, alms and charity. It imposes as a first charge upon all government revenues and resources the obligation of providing for the welfare and progress of the poorer sections of the community. Through these means it provides for the economic prosperity of all sections of the people.

The Quran stresses the need of education and intellectual development. It prescribes reflection and contemplation as religious obligations. It dissuades people from entering into conflicts and going to war with each other and prohibits aggression. It lays down detailed rules for the regulation of relations between the followers of different religions. It prohibits Muslims from saying anything derogatory to the founders or leaders of other religions. With regard to religious controversies, it points out the unreasonableness of criticism levelled against a rival creed to which one's own beliefs and doctrines are equally open. It teaches that all great religions are based upon revelation and that their deterioration is due to subsequent corruption at human hands. It therefore prohibits the wholesale condemnation of other religions.

The Quran fully safeguards the rights of women. It is the first Scripture which has laid down in express words that men owe duties and obligations to women as women owe duties and obligations to men. It explains the rights and duties of parents, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, neighbours, the poor, orphans, widows, friends and strangers, both those that are of one's own country and those that are foreigners who have taken up residence in one's country or are merely on a visit to it.

### **Islamic Form of Government**

The Quran introduced entirely new conceptions in the political field. It is the first Scripture that laid down the principle that no person can acquire the right to rule over others by virtue of hereditary succession. It teaches that government is a trust which should be committed to the care of those whom the people elect. The principle of democracy so proudly proclaimed by Europe and so much abused today was first established by the Quran. The Quran enjoins organization, discipline and obedience on the one hand, and on the other it requires public servants to discharge their obligations with honesty



and integrity. It is the first Scripture that has limited the power of those in authority and has subjected them to discipline. The Quran does not admit the right of any individual to assume absolute authority over the community and does not admit that beneficent rule and administration are a matter of favour shown by the ruler to the ruled. The Quran stresses the principle that sovereignty belongs to the people and that those in authority are entrusted with it on behalf of God (4:59). The exercise of authority on proper occasions and in a suitable manner is no favour shown to the people but is only the discharge of the trust imposed upon those in whom authority has been vested. The Quran emphasizes, therefore, that in the exercise of the franchise, electors should not be influenced by party or personal considerations but that the sole criterion should be the suitability of the candidate for the discharge of the duties to be entrusted to him. It is only then that the person elected would be in the best position to discharge those duties in the most beneficent manner. He who out of party or personal considerations helps to set up in authority an unsuitable person must share with him the responsibility for his maladministration. He cannot plead that the misfeasance is not his, for he was instrumental in putting the person concerned in a position where he could misbehave with regard to public matters.

The Quran insists upon the same moral standards being observed by governments and public authorities as are obligatory upon individuals. It does not countenance the doctrine that rigid moral standards need not be insisted upon in the case of governments and administrations. It teaches that truth is as valuable and indispensable in the case of statesmen as in the case of private citizens and that transgression is as evil and condemnable in the case of an administration as in the case of an individual. It prescribes equitable treatment and fair dealing for a government not only towards its own people but also, as in the case of individuals, towards its neighbouring governments.

The Quran enjoins constant alertness upon a believer. It exhorts Muslims to be diligent and condemns cowardice, bullying and fanaticism. It encourages the exercise of reason and reflection. It prohibits suicide and all acts or conduct that may result in self-destruction. It enjoins upon governments the obligation of safeguarding their frontiers. It prohibits aggression but enjoins unyielding resistance to it. In a war it prohibits surprise night-attacks. It insists upon the rigid observance of treaties and enjoins that no opportunity of making peace should be missed.

### **The Quran on Slavery**

The Quran does not permit the enslavement of one's countrymen or foreigners. It does, however, permit the taking of prisoners of war but prescribes that every prisoner is entitled to his freedom on payment of ransom

(47:5). No person may keep another in captivity after the latter has paid his ransom. If a person who has been taken prisoner in a war is unable to pay his ransom immediately, he is entitled to earn his freedom by means of labour. If he is not able even to do this, the Quran exhorts Muslims to help him and to find means for procuring his liberty (24:34). It may, however, be that a prisoner may prefer to remain with his Muslim master rather than return to his non-Muslim relations and live under a non-Muslim government. In such a case the Quran prescribes that he should be fairly and equitably treated. The Holy Prophet has said that in such a case the master should feed his prisoner with the kind of food he himself eats and should clothe him with the kind of garments he himself wears and should provide him with a mount like his own or should share his own with him (*Bukhārī*).

The Quran stresses the equality of all mankind. It is the first Scripture that teaches that mankind is one community. It recognizes the division into countries, nations and tribes but explains that this is only for the purpose of identification and that with regard to rights all mankind are equal. It deprecates all distinctions based on racial, economic or other fancied superiority. It warns people that those who arrogate any kind of superiority to themselves will be humbled and laid low and that those upon whom they look down will one day be raised above them. If this sublime doctrine taught by the Quran were universally accepted, the principal obstacles in the way of the establishment of world peace would be removed.

The Quran prohibits everything that has a tendency to incite people to folly and frivolity. For instance, it prohibits gambling and the use of intoxicants. It disapproves of all frivolous and vain conduct. It prohibits the use of ornaments and silk garments by men, but permits women to use them to a moderate extent.

### **The Human Soul**

The Quran is the only Scripture that deals at length with the subject of the human soul and its creation. Other Scriptures either ignore the subject altogether or merely speculate upon it. The Quran says: And they ask thee concerning the soul. Say, the soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little (17:86). This verse refutes the theory that human souls are self-existing and eternal and that they remain, as it were, in reserve in some other universe and descend to the earth from time to time and enter into human bodies. It points out that the human soul, like other created things, is created by God and develops under divine guidance. It also indicates that the birth of the soul is not a process distinct from the birth of the body. The series of developments that bring about the birth of the body also bring about the birth of the soul and provide for its

progress and uplift. This subject is dealt with in greater detail at another place in the Quran where it is said:

Verily, We created man from an extract of clay; then We placed him as a drop of sperm in a safe depository; then We fashioned the sperm into a clot; then We fashioned the clot into a shapeless lump; then We fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed it into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators (23:13-15).

This verse explains that a human being is born as the result of the nourishment which man and woman take to sustain life and to maintain their strength. This nourishment produces in the human body matter by means of which procreation takes place. When this matter enters into the womb, a portion of it which is charged with the faculty of procreation adheres to the womb and begins to draw sustenance. Within a few days it begins to thicken and grows into a flexible substance in which bones begin to form and later on, when these bones are clothed with flesh, the stages of physical procreation are completed. Simultaneously with this development a sort of distillation takes place as the result of which this growth develops animal characteristics and ultimately results in the birth of an intelligent human being. The verse shows clearly that the soul does not enter the body from outside but is a distillation from the substance which is being developed in the mother's womb. It is no doubt distinct from the substance from which it is distilled and has the effect of bestowing upon that substance animal characteristics and of converting it into a human being endowed with reason and intelligence and the faculty of progress. To illustrate this one may as a rough comparison draw attention to certain chemical processes whereby certain substances combine to form a new substance possessing distinct qualities of its own. For instance, alcohol is distilled from beet, wheat, corn or treacle. It possesses qualities different from those of the basic substance from which it is manufactured. Whereas the raw material of alcohol is liable to rot, alcohol is a preservative. Again, while the use of the raw material does not directly affect man's intellectual powers, alcohol is very potent in that respect.

In short, the Quran puts forward an altogether new conception concerning the birth of the human soul which is not to be found in any previous Scripture. As has already been stated, some of these Scriptures are altogether silent on this subject. They confine themselves to dealing with man as they find him and do not feel the need of discussing the subject of the creation of man and of the human soul. Those that purport to deal with this subject put forward one of two theories. One of these theories is that human souls are not created by God but are eternal and self-existing like God Himself. God causes these

eternal souls to enter into human bodies at the appropriate time. The second theory is that souls are created and not self-existing but God created the requisite number of them at the same time as He created the universe, and that these souls are kept in reserve and out of this reserve God causes some to enter into human bodies from time to time. The Quran is the first and only Scripture which puts forward the correct view on this matter. It teaches that the birth of the soul is the ultimate stage of the evolution of the human body in the course of its creation. It does not enter the body from outside but is born as a consequence of the changes that the body goes through in the course of its development. Yet it is something distinct from the body. It is not merely the motive power of the human body but is a distinct and permanent entity distilled from the substance of the body, just as alcohol and vinegar, though distilled from corn or fruit, are nevertheless distinct from the substances from which they are manufactured. By bringing this truth to light the Quran has entirely revolutionized the attitude of man towards the relationship between the body and the soul. Those who believe that human souls are self-existing and eternal or that they were all created in a bunch at the inception of the universe and are sent down to the earth as required from time to time, repudiate any suggestion that physical conditions and physical development have any effect upon the development of the soul. On the other hand, the Quran, by revealing the truth and reality, has emphasized that the condition and development of a person bear the closest relationship to his spiritual condition and physical development. It is true that even under the Quranic teachings every human body is bound at a certain stage to develop a soul, but the teaching of the Quran draws pointed attention to the principle that if care is devoted to the development of the human body along healthy and hygienic lines, the personality resulting therefrom will be more dynamic and more intelligent than if such development is neglected. By drawing attention to this fact the Quran has opened up new avenues for man's intellectual and spiritual development.

Some people assert that the soul possesses no faculties of its own and can therefore not be affected by any changes in the body. This is not correct. To say that the soul possesses no faculties is meaningless. If it possesses no faculties it can have no independent existence. It certainly possesses faculties but is able to manifest them only through the body. There are instances even in the material universe in which we find that certain things can manifest themselves only through coarser substances. For example, we are almost every moment brought up against the phenomenon that electricity can manifest itself only through other substances. In the same way, the faculties of the soul find expression in various ways through the body.

The Quran deals with all these and similar other subjects, but for obvious

reasons they cannot all be discussed within the space of this Introduction. The Quran claims that it deals with all matters which are necessary for man's physical, moral and spiritual development and progress and in every age this claim has been found to have been justified. In this 20th century also when science and learning are supposed to have reached a high stage of advancement, we find that the Quran fulfils all real needs and that there is no matter connected with the physical, moral, intellectual or spiritual purity and advancement of man which is not adequately dealt with in the Quran. These matters can only be briefly alluded to here. The details may be gathered from the Translation and the Explanatory Notes appended to the relevant verses. The Explanatory Notes in this Commentary have of necessity been kept to the minimum but more detailed information on these matters will be found in our Urdu Commentary of the Quran.

### **The Quranic Plan of Spiritual Universe**

Having briefly summarized the characteristics of Quranic teachings we would next draw attention to the plan of the spiritual universe which is described by the Quran. Our observation of the material universe shows that it works on a system in which several planets revolve round the sun, and the sun along with all its dependent planets travels towards a goal concerning which modern mathematicians allege that it is a centre to which several solar systems are related. Whether these speculations are based upon reality or not, it is undeniable that the whole of the material universe is running on a system; otherwise it would have ended in chaos long ago. This system is governed by a code of laws which regulate different phases of matter and as the result of which the universe is filled with a vast variety of material substances and objects. The progress and development of the material universe are dependent upon the utilization and exploitation of these material substances and objects. The Quran teaches that the spiritual universe also works under a system which revolves round an all-embracing centre which controls the whole universe. There is nothing in the universe which is outside or independent of the control of this centre. This centre is a Being that is Self-Existent and Uncreated. He is not dependent upon anything else for the purpose of fulfilling His designs. He is neither begotten nor He begets nor has He a partner or associate who shares with Him His powers or functions. This is set out very clearly in *Sūrah Al-Ikhlāṣ* (chapter 112). In that *Sūrah* God directs the Holy Prophet to proclaim that the truth is that God is unique in all His powers and attributes. On occasion one may discover a resemblance between the attributes of a thing or person and some of the attributes of God but the resemblance is only apparent and superficial. For instance, we say that God exists and it may be said that men and animals and other things also exist. The word employed to give

expression to the idea of existence is the same in both cases, but it does not signify the same reality in each case. When we say that God exists we mean that He is Self-Existing and Perfect in Himself and is not dependent for His existence upon any other being or thing. But when we say that a man exists or an animal exists or some other thing exists, all that we mean is that so long as those causes and conditions continue the interaction of which resulted in the creation of the man or of the animal or of the thing, they will continue to exist; but that if those causes and conditions are removed or are materially affected the man and the animal and the thing would also cease to exist or would be materially affected. For instance, a man is said to be alive so long as the relationship between his soul and body continues to subsist. But this relationship is temporary and terminable and when it is terminated the human body still continues to exist but it is not alive. Again, the body is composed of a multitude of atoms which assume a particular shape and enter into certain combinations under certain conditions. When these combinations are dissolved the body ceases to exist as a body. When a dead body is buried in the earth certain chemical changes take place in it and it decomposes. The atoms which had constituted the human body still remain in existence but the causes and conditions which had brought about their combination in the shape of the body having been altered, the body ceases to exist. The same happens when the body is decomposed by the action of water or of fire or of electricity. The atoms of matter which had constituted the body remain in existence but they assume new shapes and the body is no longer able to retain its shape or composition. These considerations do not apply to God. No external causes or conditions have brought Him into being or help to preserve His existence. He exists because He is Perfect and is above the limitations of time. It is alleged that the human brain is incapable of comprehending how God can exist above the limitations of time when all matter is subject to those limitations. But the truth is that God exists in a sense different from that in which man or other material beings or substances exist and the resemblance between the two in the matter of existence is only apparent and superficial. God is Unique and does not share any of His attributes with any other being or thing. At another place the Quran says that God is the Creator of the heavens and of the earth. He has created man and animals and all things in couples and has made provision for the progress of the material universe through this means (42:12). This means that men and animals and vegetables and even solids have been created in couples which may be described as male and female, or positive and negative or by any other name and that the whole universe moves forward on the basis of everything having been created in couples. Again, the Quran says: "And of everything have We created pairs, that haply you may reflect" (51:50). This means that man, by contemplating everything in the universe

and observing that everything has been created in couples, can conclude that none of these created things can be God, for, each of them is imperfect in itself and can continue its existence and perform its functions adequately only with the aid of a mate.

In short, the Quran teaches that the centre of the universe is a Being Unique in Himself and that no other being or thing bears any real resemblance to Him. The whole of the universe is dependent for its continuance and for the performance of its functions upon something else but the Being Who is the centre of the whole universe is not dependent upon any other being or thing either for His existence or for the manifestation of His attributes. The Quran teaches that that Being is neither begotten nor begets. This distinguishes the teachings of the Quran on this point from the teachings of Christianity. Christianity as well as some other Aryan creeds attribute to God the begetting of children. The Quran, on the other hand, teaches that it is only those beings that are dependent or are liable to extinction that stand in need of children. Since God is neither dependent nor would cease to exist, He is in no need of children. Since He is Self-Existent, He has no father. Thus He is unique in that He is not begotten and does not beget and is also unique in that there is no other being possessing similar powers and attributes. That is to say, God was neither created nor He begets nor has He a peer. This last teaching of the Quran refutes the doctrine of the plurality of gods which is taught by religions like Zoroastrianism.

The *Sūrah* Al-Ikhlāṣ in its few laconic verses thus proclaims that the centre of the whole universe is God, Who is a Unique Being. He is the only source of the universe and is not dependent for the manifestation of His attributes upon any other being or thing. He is not begotten nor does He beget. There is no parallel power that shares His attributes with Him nor is there any other being who possesses a rival position in opposition to Him. This very brief *Sūrah* in a few simple words refutes the errors of the doctrines of all other religions relating to the Divine Being and proclaims the perfect Unity of God.

### **God of All Peoples**

The followers of some religions believe that God stands in a peculiar relationship towards them from which all other human beings are excluded. They believe that though God is the Creator of the whole universe, He is in a special sense the God of a particular people, for instance, the Israelites or the Hindus or the Zoroastrians. The Quran rejects this doctrine and teaches that not only is God unique in His being but that He is the source of the whole universe. The word Allah occurring in the first verse of *Sūrah* Al-Ikhlāṣ means unique and also unity, that is to say, the source which is itself outside

numbers but from which all numbers proceed. This verse indicates that God is equally the Guide of the whole of mankind and entertains no special attachment to any particular people. Those who strive to attain nearness to Him He guides along the paths that lead to Him. Arabs, Jews, Persians, Indians, Chinese, Greeks and Africans are all equal in His sight, for He is the source of the creation of all of them. He alone is the unity which is the source of the multiplicity of the universe. By proclaiming that He is not begotten the Quran refutes the central doctrine of Christianity as well as of several Hindu creeds, for he who is himself begotten could not be God since he would be dependent for his own creation upon somebody else. By pointing out that He has no rival, the Quran refutes the doctrine inculcated by some religions that light and darkness are distinct and opposing forces and thus in effect set up two parallel gods.

### **God—the Ultimate Cause of All Creation**

The Quran also teaches that God is the ultimate cause of all creation; that is to say, that the whole of creation has proceeded from Him and reverts to Him. It says "He is the First and the Last" (57:4). This means that everything in the universe owes its existence to God and that the extinction of everything is also brought about under divine laws. Had not God chosen to confer existence upon the universe, it could not have come into existence; and had not God promulgated laws for its destruction it could not have been destroyed. All creation and destruction are thus controlled by divine laws and this is proof of the fact that the system of the universe has been established by an intelligent Being. The Quran says:

The Originator of the heavens and the earth! How can He have a son when He has no consort, and when He has created everything and has knowledge of all things? Such is Allah, your Lord. There is no god but He, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He is Guardian over everything (6:102, 103).

These verses point out that as God is the source of all creation He has no need of a son. A son is procreated either by accident or to fulfil a certain need. The union of a male and a female even when the object is not procreation may result in the birth of a child. The possibility of this in the case of God is negated in the verse quoted above by attention being drawn to the fact that He has no mate. It is, however, alleged by some that God might create a being and assign to him the position of a son. But a son is desired only for the purpose of assisting the father in the discharge of his functions and to perpetuate his name. The Quran points out that, God, being the Creator and Controller of all things, needs no assistance, and being Eternal His name



would endure forever. No object would, therefore, be served by His creating or appointing a son. A man sometimes makes provision for the future against unknown contingencies, but the Quran points out that since God has perfect knowledge of all things, He is under no necessity to provide for unknown contingencies. He knows the past and the future and is under no need to take precautions with regard to the future. The Quran then goes on to draw attention to the fact that not only has God created man but that He also fosters and develops him from weakness and inferiority to strength and superiority. There is no god beside Him. He has created the whole universe. All mankind, whether Persians or Arabs, Jews or Hindus, are equal in His sight. He has created all of them and provided the means of progress for all. It is incumbent therefore upon all men that they should worship Him alone, for He alone controls the universe and man can escape ruin and destruction only by fostering his relationship with Him and can never find peace away from Him.

The Quran teaches that God knows all about everything in the universe. There is nothing that is outside His ken. It says: "His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth" (2:256). Again, it says:

And thou art not engaged in anything, and thou recitest not from Him any portion of the Quran, and you do no work, but We are Witnesses of you when you are engrossed therein. And there is not hidden from thy Lord even an atom's weight in the earth or in heaven. And there is nothing smaller than that or greater, but it is recorded in a clear Book (10:62).

These verses show that the condition of a man's mind and that which he utters by word of mouth and that which he does by the exercise of his limbs are all manifest to God. Objects even as minute as an atom or even smaller are not hidden from His sight. He perceives the minutest as well as the grossest object and not only is everything within His knowledge but all that is done or that happens is preserved in such manner as to produce its due result in its season. The verse says that all these things are recorded in an open Book. This means that whereas ordinary records are hidden from the eyes of men and after they are entered up they disappear even from the sight of the person making them, the divine record of all that occurs is such that it speaks for itself, that is to say, every action leads to its result in accordance with the divine law and the divine will. Again, the Quran says that since God is beyond physical perception, "Eyes cannot reach Him" (6:104), that is to say, God is by His nature different from all material objects and it is not therefore possible to perceive Him through any of the physical senses.

The Quran teaches that God has full power to carry out all His designs. It says: "Allah has the power to do all that He wills" (2:110). It should be noted

that the verse does not merely say, God has power to do all things; for such phraseology would leave room for foolish people to raise absurd questions. It has, for instance, been asked whether God has power to destroy Himself or whether He has power to create another god like Himself. It is obvious that for God to do any such thing would be absurd and undesirable and it is incompatible with His Majesty and Perfection to indulge in anything absurd or undesirable. The Quran has, therefore, refrained from stating that God has power to do everything and has merely said that God has power to carry into effect all that He may determine to do. God, being perfect, determines only that which is perfect and it would be the height of folly to attribute to God a desire to destroy Himself or to create another god like unto Himself.

### **Principal Divine Attributes**

The opening chapter of the Quran (*Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah*) illustrates the operation of the attributes of God. It explains that the divine attributes, the operation of which affects man in any manner, branch out from four principal attributes.

Of these, the first is *Rabbul-‘Ālamīn* (رب العالمين); that is to say, God creates everything and then fosters everything gradually towards perfection.

Secondly, He is *Raḥmān* (الرحمن). This means that without any effort on the part of His creatures, He provides everything that is necessary for their development and progress.

Thirdly, He is *Raḥīm* (الرحيم). This means that when those of His creatures that are endowed with will and intelligence voluntarily choose to do good and to resist evil, God bestows upon them the highest reward and that reward continues indefinitely.

Fourthly, He is *Mālik-e-Yaumid-Dīn* (مالك يوم الدين). This means that the ultimate judgement concerning everything rests with Him. Everything owes its origin to Him and the end of everything is also in His hands. Man and other creatures may bring about temporary and ephemeral changes but have not the power to effect any permanent change in the universe. For instance, man has no power to create either matter or soul. He is equally without power to destroy either, though he may be able to effect temporary changes in matter and to give it different shapes. As the attribute of creation belongs to God alone the attribute of destruction also is peculiar to Him. Nothing can ultimately be destroyed till God decrees its destruction. This is an obvious truth and the Quran expresses it by stating that God is the Master of the time of judgement. That is to say, the final judgement regarding everything that is set in motion rests in His hands and these judgements are arrived at by Him in His capacity of Master of the universe and not merely as a judge who adjudicates upon the rights of the parties before him. A judge is bound to

make an impartial adjudication upon the matter in dispute between the parties having regard to the rights and obligations of each. God is not so bound, for though when He pronounces His judgement no man is wronged or is cheated of his due, He is free to remit as much as He may choose out of what may be due to Himself. He does not insist upon the proverbial pound of flesh. As a master may treat his servants with mercy and act benevolently towards them and bestow favours upon them, so may God forgive the trespasses of His creatures and overlook their defaults and bestow His favours upon them. Failure to appreciate this attribute of God has led to the adoption by Christians of so untenable a doctrine as that of Atonement. The Christian doctrine is that God has, like a secular judge, no power to forgive any person his default. In making this erroneous assumption Christians overlook the fact that a judge is called upon to adjudicate between two parties and that he himself possesses no rights in respect of the subject matter of the dispute. The relationship between God and His creatures is, however, very different from that between a judge and the parties to a dispute. God is both a claimant and the authority entitled to make the award. A judge is never himself a claimant. He is called upon merely to determine the rights of the parties before him. In other words, a judge has to arrive at a determination between two persons, one making a claim against the other. These persons may be both private individuals or one representing the State and the other a private individual. God determines between Himself and His creatures. He thus occupies dual position. He is both claimant and judge. As a claimant He is entitled to remit the whole or as much as He chooses of His claim. Such a remission would be mercy and not injustice, for the remission relates to God's own claim and does not operate to deprive any person of his right. This is in perfect accord with reason.

On the other hand the doctrine of Atonement is wholly opposed to reason. If belief in the crucifixion of Jesus is indispensable for the remission of sins, then how did the Prophets who appeared before Jesus and their followers attain salvation? Was it not necessary for the crucifixion to have taken place at the inception of the universe so that all mankind should have attained salvation? Again, how is it that sins may be remitted through belief in the crucifixion but not through repentance, which is the natural means of purification of the heart. Belief in an external matter is not a natural means of purification of the heart, whereas remorse and contrition, which inflict a kind of death upon a man's longings and desires and inspire him with a fresh determination to lead a virtuous life, are a natural and certain means of purification of the heart. It is surprising that Christians should believe that a sinner's heart is purified by belief in the crucifixion of Jesus and that God in consequence forgives him his sins, but they should refuse to accept the truth that when a sinner experiences remorse and admits his fault before God and

asks His forgiveness, God forgives him his sins and errors.

We observe that in the transaction of their daily affairs Christians themselves follow this principle. When a man commits a fault and is then overtaken by true remorse and, admitting his fault, promises to make amends, they forgive him. For instance, this principle is followed in their schools. When a schoolmaster finds that a pupil has been at fault or has been negligent concerning his studies or his other duties and the former is convinced that the pupil is contrite and is prepared to make amends for the future, he forgives him. Yet, if the doctrine of Atonement were sustainable, all that should be necessary in such a case should be for the pupil to say that though he has been at fault he is a believer in the crucifixion of Jesus and that his fault should be overlooked. But this is not what happens. The master insists that to be forgiven the pupil must show that he is ashamed of his default and is ready to make amends for the future. He is not prepared to forgive merely on the assurance that the pupil believes in the crucifixion.

It may, however, be alleged that belief in the crucifixion is tantamount to purification of the heart. This is, however, belied by the conduct of Christians all over the world. The evils and the vices that prevail in Christian countries can scarcely be matched in any other part of the world.

Then what is it that the Christians have gained through belief in the Atonement? If they assert that they will attain salvation through belief in this doctrine, this would be untenable, as we have already shown that salvation can only be attained through true repentance and that the Prophets who appeared before Jesus and their followers attained salvation only by this means. If Christians claim that the Atonement brings about purity of heart, this has not been achieved by Christians in spite of their belief in the Atonement. We do not mean to imply that no Christian enjoys purity of heart, but we do assert that the purity of no Christian's heart is due to belief in the Atonement. If the heart of a Christian is purified it is purified like the hearts of other people, through remorse and repentance or through the worship of a God i.e, prayer and fasting as was said by Jesus himself: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

### **Other Attributes of God**

It is not possible to enter into a detailed explanation of the various attributes of God referred to in the Quran, either expressly or by inference, as stemming from the four principal attributes which have just been described. A brief mention of them may, however, be made here:

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|--------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) Al-Mālik i.e.  | The Sovereign.            |
| (2) Al-Quddūs i.e. | The Holy One.             |
| (3) As-Salām i.e.  | The Source of Peace.      |
| (4) Al-Mu'min i.e. | The Bestower of Security. |

(5) Al-Muhaimin i.e.	The Protector.
(6) Al-‘Azīz i.e.	The Mighty.
(7) Al-Jabbār i.e.	The Subduer.
(8) Al-Mutakabbir i.e.	The Exalted.
(9) Al-Khāliq i.e.	The Creator.
(10) Al-Bārī’ i.e.	The Maker.
(11) Al-Muṣawwir i.e.	The Fashioner.
(12) Al-Ghaffār i.e.	The Great Forgiver.
(13) Al-Qahhār i.e.	The Most Supreme.
(14) Al-Wahhāb i.e.	The Bestower.
(15) Ar-Razzāq i.e.	The Great Sustainer.
(16) Al-Fattāḥ i.e.	The Opener (of the doors of success for mankind); The Judge.
(17) Al-‘Alīm i.e.	The All-Knowing.
(18) Al-Qābiḍ i.e.	The Controller; He Who keeps all things within limits; The Seizer.
(19) Al-Bāsiṭ i.e.	The Enlarger; He Who enlarges the means of subsistence.
(20) Al-Khāfiḍ i.e.	The Depressor; He Who brings low the proud.
(21) Ar-Rāfi‘ i.e.	The Exalter.
(22) Al-Mu‘izz i.e.	The Bestower of honour.
(23) Al-Mudhill i.e.	The Abaser; He Who abases the haughty.
(24) As-Samī‘ i.e.	The All-Hearing.
(25) Al-Baṣīr i.e.	The All-Seeing.
(26) Al-Ḥakam i.e.	The Wise Judge.
(27) Al-‘Adl i.e.	The Just.
(28) Al-Laṭīf i.e.	The Incomprehensible; The Knower of all subtleties; The Benignant.
(29) Al-Khabīr i.e.	The All-Aware.
(30) Al-Ḥalīm i.e.	The Forbearing.
(31) Al-‘Azīm i.e.	The Great.
(32) Al-Ghafūr i.e.	The Most Forgiving.
(33) Ash-Shakūr i.e.	The Most Appreciating.
(34) Al-‘Aliyy i.e.	The High.
(35) Al-Kabīr i.e.	The Incomparably Great.
(36) Al-Ḥafīẓ i.e.	The Guardian.
(37) Al-Muqīt i.e.	The Preserver; He Who preserves the faculties of all created things; The Powerful.

(38) Al-Ḥasīb i.e.	The Reckoner.
(39) Al-Jalīl i.e.	The Lord of Majesty.
(40) Al-Karīm i.e.	The Noble.
(41) Ar-Raqīb i.e.	The Watchful.
(42) Al-Mujīb i.e.	The Answerer of prayers.
(43) Al-Wāsi‘ i.e.	The Bountiful; The All-Embracing.
(44) Al-Ḥakīm i.e.	The Wise.
(45) Al-Wadūd i.e.	The Loving.
(46) Al-Majīd i.e.	The Lord of honour.
(47) Al-Bā‘ith i.e.	The Raiser (of the dead).
(48) Ash-Shahīd i.e.	The Witness; The Observer.
(49) Al-Ḥaqq i.e.	The True.
(50) Al-Wakīl i.e.	The Disposer of affairs; The Keeper.
(51) Al-Qawiyy i.e.	The Powerful.
(52) Al-Matīn i.e.	The Strong.
(53) Al-Waliyy i.e.	The Friend.
(54) Al-Ḥamīd i.e.	The Praiseworthy.
(55) Al-Muḥṣī i.e.	The Recorder.
(56) Al-Mubdi’ i.e.	The Author (of life); The Beginner.
(57) Al-Mu‘īd i.e.	The Repeater (of life).
(58) Al-Muḥyī i.e.	The Life-giver.
(59) Al-Mumīt i.e.	The Controller of the causes of death; The Destroyer.
(60) Al-Ḥayy i.e.	The Living.
(61) Al-Qayyūm i.e.	The Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining.
(62) Al-Wājid i.e.	The Discoverer; The Finder.
(63) Al-Mājid i.e.	The Glorious.
(64) Al-Qādir i.e.	The Possessor of power and authority.
(65) Al-Muqtadir i.e.	The Omnipotent.
(66) Al-Muqaddim i.e.	The Provider (of the means of progress and advancement).
(67) Al-Mu’akhhir i.e.	The Degradar; The Postponer.
(68) Al-Awwal i.e.	The First.
(69) Al-Ākhir i.e.	The Last.
(70) Az-Zāhir i.e.	The Manifest; He to Whose existence every created thing clearly points.

(71) Al-Bāṭin i.e.	The Hidden; He through Whom the hidden reality of every thing is revealed,
(72) Al-Wālī i.e.	The Ruler
(73) Al-Muṭa‘āl i.e.	The Most High: The Possessor of excellent attributes.
(74) Al-Barr i.e.	The Beneficent.
(75) At-Tawwāb i.e.	The Oft-Returning with compassion; The Acceptor of repentance.
(76) Al-Mun‘im i.e.	The Bestower of favours.
(77) Al-Muntaqim i.e.	The Awarder of appropriate punishment; The Avenger.
(78) Al-‘Afuww i.e.	The Effacer of sins.
(79) Ar-Ra‘ūf i.e.	The Compassionate.
(80) Mālikul-Mulk i.e.	The Lord of Sovereignty.
(81) Al-Muqsiṭ i.e.	The Equitable.
(82) Al-Jāmi‘ i.e.	The Gatherer; The Assembler.
(83) Al-Ghanīyy i.e.	The Self-Sufficient.
(84) Al-Mughnī i.e.	The Provider of the means of sufficiency; The Enricher.
(85) Al-Māni‘ i.e.	The Withholder, The Prohibitor.
(86) Aḍ-Ḍarr i.e.	The Inflictor of punishment.
(87) An-Nāfi‘ i.e.	The Benefactor.
(88) An-Nūr i.e.	The Light.
(89) Al-Hādī i.e.	The Guide.
(90) Al-Badī‘ i.e.	The Originator.
(91) Al-Bāqī i.e.	The Survivor.
(92) Al-Wārith i.e.	The Inheritor.
(93) Ar-Rashīd i.e.	The Director to the right way.
(94) Aṣ-Ṣabūr i.e.	The Patient.
(95) Dhul-‘Arsh i.e.	The Lord of the Throne.
(96) Dhul-Waqār i.e.	The Possessor of staidness and gravity; He Who does everything with reason and to fulfil a certain purpose.
(97) Al-Mutakallim i.e.	The Speaker; He Who speaks to His servants.
(98) Ash-Shāfi i.e.	The Healer.
(99) Al-Kāfi i.e.	The Sufficient.
(100) Al-Aḥad i.e.	The Unique; The Lord of Unity.

(101) Al-Wāḥid i.e.	The One.
(102) Aṣ-Ṣamad i.e.	The Besought of all; The Independent; The Everlasting.
(103) Dhul-Jalāl Wal-Ikrām i.e.	The Lord of Majesty and Bounty.

### Three Categories of Divine Attributes

These attributes are either expressly mentioned in the Quran or are deducible from Quranic verses. A consideration of these attributes helps visualize the plan of the spiritual universe which the Quran puts forward. They may be roughly divided into three categories:

First, those that are peculiar to God and are not related in any way to His creatures e.g. Al-Ḥayy—The Living; Al-Qādir—The Possessor of power and authority; Al-Majīd—The Glorious,

Secondly, those that are related to the creation of the universe and indicate the relationship between God and His creatures and His attitude towards them e.g. Al-Khāliq—The Creator; Al-Mālik—The Sovereign, etc.

Thirdly, those that come into operation in consequence of the good or bad actions of such of God's creatures as are endowed with will e.g. Ar-Raḥīm—He rewards the voluntary good actions of man abundantly and repeatedly; Mālik-e-Yaumid-Dīn—The Master of the Day of Judgement; Al-'Afuww—He overlooks faults; Ar-Ra'ūf—He is Compassionate etc.

Some of these attributes appear to be repetitions but on consideration one finds fine distinctions between them. For instance, several of these attributes relate to creation as Khāliq Kullī Shai'in, Al-Badī', Al-Fāṭir, Al-Khāliq, Al-Mu'id, Al-Muṣawwir, Ar-Rabb. At first sight they appear to overlap but in fact they signify different aspects.

*Khāliq Kullī Shai'in* means that God has created all things and signifies that He is also the Creator of matter and of souls. Some people believe that God fashions but does not create. They do not, for instance, regard Him as the Creator of matter or of souls; they believe that matter and souls are self-existing and eternal like God Himself. If God had been described in the Quran merely as the Creator, these people could have claimed that they too believe in God as the Creator in the sense that He brings about the union of the body and the soul and thus fashions and in a sense creates man. This interpretation would have left the real meaning of the Quran in this respect in doubt. By describing God as the Creator of all things, the Quran has enlarged the scope of the attribute of creation, so as to include the creation of matter and souls.

*Badī'* signifies that God has planned and designed the system of the universe and this system is not, therefore, accidental or copied from somewhere else.



*Fāṭir* means the One Who extracts something by breaking the shell. The attribute *Fāṭir*, therefore, indicates that God has created matter with inherent faculties of development and that in due season He breaks open the shell or covering which confines the operation of these faculties and brings them into operation. For instance, a seed possesses the faculty of growing into a plant or a tree but this faculty comes into operation only at a certain season and under certain conditions. When those conditions arise and that season arrives, the seed begins to develop its faculty of growth. This attribute thus indicates that God has created the universe in accordance with a set of laws and that all sections of the universe continue to develop in accordance with those laws. All the time certain parts of the universe go on traversing preparatory stages and their inherent faculties come into play at certain seasons and then new forms of life become perceptible.

The attribute of *Khalq* (creation) also signifies planning. *Khāliq* (Creator) therefore also means that God has arranged all things in their proper order and that the universe is controlled by a system.

*Bārī* signifies that God starts different manifestations of creation and then appoint laws in obedience to which the thing created goes on repeating and multiplying its species. This is reinforced by the attribute *Mu'īd*, which signifies repetition.

*Muṣawwir* signifies that God has given each created thing a shape which is appropriate to its functions. This shows that the perfection of creation consists not merely in endowing the thing created with appropriate faculties but is achieved also by giving it appropriate shape.

*Rabb* signifies that God after creating goes on fostering the faculties of created things by stages and thus leads them to perfection.

All these attributes thus signify different aspects of creation. In the same way several other attributes which appear at first sight to be overlapping or mere repetitions are in fact intended to signify very fine distinctions. Once the significance of each attribute is clearly grasped, one is able to appreciate the beauty and the glory of the spiritual universe that the Quran describes.

The New Testament makes little mention of the attributes of God. Neither the Torah nor any other single scripture describes all these attributes. If, however, all the Jewish scriptures are taken together, one finds mention in them at different places of a good many of the attributes that we have set out above, but even then all are not mentioned. It is commonly thought by Muslims that God possesses 99 attributes. This idea is related to certain Jewish traditions which are based upon the attributes of God mentioned in the Jewish scriptures. The Quran makes mention of many more than the 103 attributes we have mentioned above but those we have not set out. In fact many of the attributes of God, the operation of which is not connected with

man, have not been mentioned in the Quran and it would therefore not be right to assign any particular number to the attributes of God. Wherever in Islamic literature any mention of a number is made in this connection it is only in contrast to the Jewish claim and not for the purpose of expressing the absolute reality.

The Vedas mention very few attributes of God and the same is the case with the Zend Avesta. The truth is that as the Quran is the perfect Book and contains complete guidance for all stages of spiritual development, it sets out all the attributes of God the knowledge of which is necessary for man, including those that have been mentioned in previous Scriptures and those that have not been so mentioned.

### **Divine Attributes Not Contradictory**

It is sometimes alleged that some of these attributes are inconsistent with others. For instance, God is Merciful and yet He punishes. He is free from all needs and yet He creates and makes provision for the guidance of mankind which indicates a desire on His part to bring into existence man and other creatures. Such criticism often originates in minds that are not given to deep reflection. They do not realize that a large part of the real beauty of the universe is due to its diversity and that what they regard as conflict and inconsistency is evidence only of the richness of the pattern of the universe. Everything in the universe moves within its appointed sphere and may be regarded as a link in a huge chain.

It is true that God punishes, but this is done in accordance with His laws regulating punishments and penalties. When the operation of these laws demands the imposition of a penalty, God decrees punishment. As against this, God has promulgated laws through which His attributes of mercy and forgiveness find manifestation. When the operation of these laws necessitates the exercise of the attribute of mercy or of forgiveness, that attribute comes into operation. Thus at the same time His attribute of punishment manifests itself in accordance with His laws in respect of one person and His attribute of forgiveness or mercy or benevolence manifests itself in respect of another. One person is born in manifestation of God's attribute of creation and at the same moment another person dies in manifestation of God's attribute of destruction. The question is generally asked why God causes people to die when the Quran describes Him as *Rabbul-Ālamīn*, which means that God creates and fosters and leads to perfection. This question indicates lack of reflection on the part of the persons who put it. The Quran does not describe God as the *Rabb* of this world alone but as the *Rabb* of all the worlds. Death means translation from one universe to another. When a person is so translated, the attribute of *Rabūbiyyat* (creation and fostering) makes itself

manifest in respect of that person in the universe to which he is translated. Whatever exists in any universe is fostered under the attribute of *Rabūbiyyat*. If we are, however, to suppose that something has ceased to exist, then it has ceased to be part of any universe and the question of the manifestation of the attribute of *Rabbul-‘Ālamīn* (Creator, Sustainer and Fosterer of all the worlds) in respect of that thing does not arise at all.

The Quran teaches that for the regulation and adjustment of the attributes which affect mankind God has set in motion two laws. The first of these is: "My mercy encompasses all things" (7:157); and the second is set out in the verse: "What has happened to you that you expect not wisdom and staidness from Allah" (71:14). The latter verse means that whatever God does is based upon wisdom. One of the attributes of God mentioned in the Quran is the Wise, which also indicates the same thing.

These two laws indicate that every manifestation of an attribute of God is for the achievement of a definite purpose or object. They also show that whenever there is a struggle between the laws demanding punishment and the laws necessitating the exercise of mercy, the latter will prevail and punishment will be subordinated to it. Contemplation of the operation of these two laws fills the heart of a Muslim with the love of God which pervades the whole of his being. A Muslim, for the purpose of creating love and devotion in his heart towards God, is not under the necessity of doing violence to his reason and of accepting the doctrine of Atonement and the crucifixion of a human being who bore the burden of all sins. It is enough for him that the Quran teaches that every manifestation of God's attributes is governed by wisdom and has a definite purpose and object and that, being human, if he is on occasion guilty of a weakness or commits a fault and is then overtaken by remorse and contrition and makes up his mind to eschew all manner of error in the future, the love and forgiveness of God will completely cover him. This knowledge melts his heart and it is dissolved in an ecstasy of love for God. A Muslim realizes that though God is the Creator and the Sovereign, He forgives the trespasses of His servants, overlooks their faults, and makes every manner of provision for their advancement. When He imposes a penalty, His object is not to inflict pain or to humiliate but to enable His erring servants to reform themselves and to march forward along the paths of progress. He realizes that God is ever ready to accept true repentance and covers up the faults of His servants and through remorse and repentance wipes them out altogether. He finds that God, Who is the Lord of Majesty and Exaltation, hears the prayers of His servants and that His eagerness to draw near to His servants is many times greater than the eagerness of His servants to approach near to Him. Realizing all this, his heart is filled with the love of God and he is driven towards Him in a paroxysm of love and devotion even

greater than that which drives an infant to the arms of its mother; and God too inclines towards such a servant of His with love and tenderness many times greater than that of a mother who rushes to comfort her crying and distressed child.

### **Man—the Centre of the Universe**

The Quran teaches that God desired to bring into existence a universe which should serve as a manifestation of His Majesty and His Light and that this was the cause of the creation of the universe. It says that God created the heavens and the earth in six periods. Before that God ruled over water. God's object in creating the heavens and the earth out of water was to bring into existence a being endowed with the will to choose between good and evil. These beings would pass through various trials and would seek to outstrip one another in doing good and thus show which of them had attained to perfection (11:8). This verse shows that before matter assumed its present form, it existed in liquid shape, or, in other words, the creation of the material universe began with a pure atom of hydrogen and that the universe was gradually developed out of it. With regard to the pre-material stage the Quran says:

Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were a closed up mass, then We opened them out? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? (21:31)

The verse purports to say that the heavens and the earth were at first an amorphous mass and God then split them and formed them into a solar system and from the beginning He has always created life out of water. The verse indicates that the spiritual universe would also develop as the material universe had developed. God, in accordance with the laws which He had set in motion, split the mass of matter, and its scattered bits became the units of the solar system. In the same way God brings about revolutions in the spiritual universe. When the spiritual condition of mankind degenerates and the spiritual atmosphere becomes dense and oppressive, God causes a light to appear which causes a disturbance in the darkness and shakes it up and out of this apparently lifeless mass a perpetually moving spiritual solar system is created which begins to reach out from its centre and eventually embraces whole countries or the whole earth, according to the impetus behind it. The creation of the material universe starts from water; so also the spiritual universe comes into life with heavenly water which is revelation.

According to the Quran, the universe passed from stage to stage till the earth assumed a shape and developed properties which could sustain human life. The Quran teaches that the creation of man was the ultimate object of the creation of at least our solar system. When that stage arrived, God created

man in the material universe so that he should become the manifestation of divine attributes and should serve as a mirror to reflect the beautiful image of God and should become the foundation of a spiritual universe. God's creation comprises millions of species. The Quran says: "None knows the hosts of thy Lord but He" (74:32). Man, however, occupies a position of dignity and honour among created beings for the reason that he serves as a mirror for the attributes of God. That is why Muslim mystics have called man a microcosm, meaning that man possesses the attributes of the whole of creation and may be regarded as an epitome of the universe. As a survey map, though on a small scale, indicates all features of the country which it depicts, in the same way there are represented in the human body all the characteristics of the universe. Man is, therefore, the axis or centre of the created universe. The Quran says that the whole universe is created by God for the service of man and our observation confirms that man rules over the whole of creation and that no part of creation rules over him. He is no doubt affected by changes of climate, by the light of the planets and the stars, by thunder and lightning, by storms and blizzards, by epidemics and pestilences, but he is not in any way ruled by these phenomena. Those that rule are often affected by those over whom they rule and yet there is never any difficulty in determining who rules and who is ruled. Thus though man is affected by the other parts of creation, he nevertheless rules over them. He controls rivers, oceans, mountains, winds, thunder, rain, herbs and medicines and is manifestly the central point of creation or at least of that part of creation which is related to our universe. God's creation is vast and there may be worlds in existence of which we have no knowledge. We cannot therefore speculate with regard to them.

### **The Culmination of Process of Evolution**

The Quran, contrary to the accounts given in the Old and the New Testaments, teaches that man was created through a gradual process. We have adverted to this subject above and have cited Quranic authority for the proposition we have stated. There is another verse in the Quran which shows that the creation of man was the culmination of a gradual process and that it is not correct to say that God formed man out of clay and breathed His spirit into him. The Quran says: "And He has created you in different stages and different forms" (71:15). That is to say, God has created man by making him pass through stage after stage and condition after condition. According to the Quran, therefore, man was not created suddenly at one stroke but as the result of a gradual process. In the same way man's intellectual development also proceeded gradually. The Quran shows that human beings were in existence before Adam but that they were not yet able to bear the responsibility of revealed law. They lived in caves and in mountain fastnesses. It is for this

reason that the Quran has called them by the name of jinn, which means literally those that dwell out of sight. Some people have applied this word to the genii of tales and fables, but the Quran does not support this interpretation. It expressly states that when Adam and his people went out of the garden (which again, according to the Quran, was a region of the earth and is not to be confused with Paradise) God warned them against *Iblīs* "who was one of the jinn" and told them to be careful of him and his people as they would all have to live together upon the earth wherein they would spend their spans of existence and wherein they would die (7:26, 28). Again, addressing Adam and his people and *Iblīs* and his people God admonishes all of them to accept His Prophets when they should appear among them from time to time (2:39). All this shows that the jinn of the time of Adam and their leader *Iblīs* were of the human race. The genii of the fables do not live in company with men nor are they in any other way connected with men. The Quran does not lend any support to the idea of the Jinn of the fables. Those whom the Quran describes as Jinn in connection with Adam were human beings who dwelt upon the earth but whose mental faculties were not yet fully developed. When the stage of the full development of the mental faculties of man was reached, God sent His revelation to the most perfect man of that generation, namely, Adam. This revelation was confined to a few social rules relating to the formation of a society and the provision of food and other means of maintenance for it. Those whose social sense was not yet fully developed refused to submit themselves to Adam. God punished them and gave Adam victory over them. For the future, God decreed that Prophets would continue to appear and those who believed in them would identify themselves with Adam and his people and those who rejected them would identify themselves with the jinn who had opposed Adam. Each Prophet is raised to help forward the intellectual and spiritual evolution of man. Those, who are opposed to the next stage of evolution and are not willing to submit to the limitations and regulations which God seeks to impose through His Prophet to help forward the process of evolution, reject the Prophet.

In short, the Quran teaches that man's physical creation and development are the result of a process of evolution and in the same way his intellectual development is also the result of a process of evolution. Adam was not the first human being but was the first human being whose intellect was capable of accepting and bearing the responsibility of revelation. The Quran nowhere states that God desired to create man and therefore created Adam. The Quran expressly states that God decided to appoint a "Vicegerent in the earth" and appointed Adam. This shows that at the time of the appointment of Adam as God's Vicegerent on earth, there were human beings dwelling upon the earth

but none of them had become the recipient of divine revelation since their mental faculties were not yet fully developed. When the development of human intellect arrived at the stage where man became capable of forming a society and living in accordance with an organized system, God sent His revelation to Adam, who possessed the most highly developed intellect in his own age, and he thus became the first Prophet. He was not the first man but the first Prophet, and the revelation received by him comprised a few clear and simple social laws and a simple explanation of some of the divine attributes.

At another place the Quran says: "And We did create you and then We gave you shape and then said We to the angels, 'submit to Adam' " (7:12). The verse means that God created man and then gave shape to his faculties and then commanded the angels to bow down to Adam. This verse also clearly shows that man had been in existence prior to the time of Adam. The development of man's intellectual faculties indicates that before the appearance of Adam man had already passed through several stages of evolution. The verse indicates that after man was created his faculties developed from stage to stage and assumed different shapes and he began to be distinguished from the other animal creation around him and when his intellect was developed to a certain degree, Adam was created and God sent His revelation to him.

### **The Object of Man's Creation**

The Quran teaches that man has been created to serve as a manifestation of God's attributes and to illustrate them in his life. It says, "And I have created the jinn and men only that they may serve Me and receive the impress of My attributes" (51:57). (As has already been explained the word jinn does not mean some species of invisible creation but is intended to signify certain classes of people). At another place the Quran says, "He it is Who made you vicegerents in the earth. So he who disbelieves, will himself suffer the consequences of his disbelief" (35:40). This means that if a man voluntarily abdicates the position that God has assigned to him, he does not thereby in any manner injure God but merely dislodges himself from a position of honour and will suffer the consequences himself. These verses show that man has been created to illustrate in his own life the attributes of God and that he is the vicegerent of God upon earth. He is, thus, the central point of the material universe. Since Prophets are raised for the reform of mankind and to remind them of the object of their life and to guide them rightly towards its achievement, they become in their spheres the centres for mankind. In other words, man is the sun round which the material universe revolves and each of

the Prophets is a sun round which the men, for whose guidance that Prophet is sent, revolve.

### **Law of Nature and Law of Sharī'ah**

The Quran shows that God has put into motion two kinds of laws for the purpose of reminding man of his duties and of helping him along the path of progress. One of these is the law of nature which is related to man's material progress. Since this law is not directly related to man's spiritual advancement, a contravention of this law results in material prejudice to man but does not involve God's displeasure or anger. The whole of the material universe is invested with the appropriate impetus of this law and is impelled by it. No direct revelation is made by God concerning the details of this law.

The second is the Law of Sharī'ah which regulates man's spiritual progress. A contravention of this law involves divine displeasure, for it is only by conformity to this law that man can succeed in fulfilling the purpose for which he has been created and contravention of this law arrests his progress towards that objective. But every contravention of the Law of Sharī'ah has not the effect of depriving a man altogether of his chances of achieving his objective. The Quran teaches that the Law of Sharī'ah collectively helps a man to attain spiritual purity and exaltation. Just as every contravention of the law of nature does not involve a man in complete ruin and destruction nor does every carelessness in the matter of diet induce disease, in the same way not every contravention of the Law of Sharī'ah draws upon man the wrath of God or deprives him of all chance of reaching his goal. The very object of the Law of Sharī'ah is to help man to attain spiritual perfection. Where an extensive system is designed to bring about a certain result, its failure in one respect may be corrected or compensated for by its success in another and the desired result may yet be achieved. The human body, for instance, is a complex organization and human life depends for its healthy continuance upon various factors like food, water, air, etc. On occasion one or more of these factors become tainted but this does not necessarily result in the organism becoming diseased. The defect produced by deficiency in one factor may be overpowered by the healthy working of the other factors. The same is the case with the Law of Sharī'ah. It comprises rules and principles which are collectively designed for the spiritual advancement of man. Short of the repudiation of the Kingdom of God or of the authority of His Prophets, any defect that may be produced in human conduct by an error or weakness is remediable. If the defect is serious, it can be remedied only through true repentance and sincere prayer.

The Quran indicated that in addition to these two laws there are two other laws which are constantly in operation, namely, the social law and the moral



law. But these are in reality the extensions of the boundaries of the law of nature and the Law of Sharī'ah. The moral law is the extension of the Law of Sharī'ah and the social law is the extension of the law of nature and they act and react upon each other to a large degree. Many rules of social law are based upon morality and many rules of moral law are based upon sociology. Since man has been intended to live as a member of society, he is in need of both these sets of laws. The social law being a continuation, as it were, of the law of nature, man has been permitted a very large choice in the framing of it. The moral law being related to the Law of Sharī'ah, its fundamentals are governed by that law, though some of its details are left to man's choice. The whole system of the universe runs on the basis of these laws. The law of nature and the Law of Sharī'ah are both appointed by God and man has no share in framing them. The social law and the moral law, however, are a combination of divine commandments and human regulations, and in this manner by associating human cooperation with the divine design the very best guidance is furnished for the running of the universe. So long as these two streams continue to run in parallel channels, the world goes on progressing in peace and man is able to set up a beneficent system upon the earth which is in accord with the Kingdom of God, but when these two streams begin to run in opposite directions, or in other words, when human reason is diverted from the course which runs parallel to divine guidance and is thus deprived of divine blessing, the world becomes a prey to conflict and discord. It is then ruled neither by God nor by man but becomes subject to the sway of satanic forces; for man can claim to be human only so long as he follows divine guidance. When he ceases to do that, he descends to the level of the brutes.

To enable man to attain nearness to God it was necessary to leave him free to choose his course of action. The Quran teaches that man is free in one sphere and is subject to compulsion in another. He is free in the matter of the Law of Sharī'ah and has no choice where the operation of the law of nature is concerned. He is subject to compulsion in this last sphere for the reason that his spiritual progress is not directly related to the operation of the law of nature. He has been given free choice of action in the sphere of the Law of Sharī'ah inasmuch as he can become the object of divine favour and bounty only by acting upon the Law of Sharī'ah and no reward can be earned unless there is free choice in the matter of action. What a man is under compulsion to do can earn him no reward.

The Quran recognizes that man's spiritual welfare and progress is affected by his material surroundings and to the extent to which it is so affected limitations are placed upon his actions, but it also teaches that man's actions are appraised by God with reference to his background and environment. For instance, if a millionaire spends a small fraction of his

wealth in the service of humanity and a poor man possessing only the equivalent of that small fraction spends the whole of it in the service of his fellow beings, they will not, in the eyes of God, be entitled to an equal reward. The millionaire devoted a thousandth or a hundred-thousandth part of his wealth to the winning of the pleasure of God and the poor man gave his all for that purpose. The reward earned by each will be in proportion to the sacrifice made by each. God looks not to the volume of a man's actions but appraises them against their true background. He does not overlook the handicaps to which a man is subject and which limit the scope of his actions nor the conveniences which a man enjoys and which facilitate his actions.

### **Evolution of Spiritual Universe Completed in the Holy Prophet**

We learn from the Quran that as the material universe has developed gradually, a similar gradual process of development was prescribed for the spiritual universe. That is why the perfect code of laws was not revealed at the inception of the universe. Revelation was sent down to man in consonance with the stage of development reached by him. Eventually man arrived at a stage when he could bear the responsibility of the perfect Law of Sharī'ah. God in His wisdom then caused to appear the most perfect human being in the person of the Holy Prophet of Islam and revealed to him the perfect Law of Sharī'ah and the Perfect Scripture. That perfect Law is Islam and that Perfect Scripture is the Quran. The evolution of the spiritual universe was completed in the person of the Holy Prophet. As man is the central point of the material universe and the respective Prophets were the central points of the nations to which and the ages for which they were sent, the Holy Prophet of Islam is the central point for the whole of mankind. The plan of the universe, therefore, put forward by the Quran is that the first central point of the universe is man. In their different spheres mankind revolve around their respective Prophets, the Prophets revolve around the Holy Prophet of Islam and he, in turn, revolves round and leads the whole universe to God and the spiritual universe is, thus, carried to its perfection.

### **Quran—the Perfect Scripture**

It has already been stated that God has through His Prophets provided for the progress and perfection of man by means of the Law of Sharī'ah, the moral law and the social law. Since the Quran is the most perfect Scripture, it deals with all these three laws. It sets out the Law of Sharī'ah and the moral law in full and states the fundamental principles of the social law leaving the rest of the field of social law to be developed and filled in by man himself. In

the sphere of the moral law, the Quran lays down this fundamental principle that it is the appropriate use of the natural faculties which constitutes high moral qualities. The suppression or stultification of natural faculties or desires is as much a moral offence as is complete submission to their domination. He who seeks to kill his natural faculties or completely to suppress his natural desires sets at defiance the law of nature. He whose mind is filled with, and whose energies are devoted to, the fulfilment of his natural desires sets the Law of Shari'ah at defiance and is heading towards spiritual destruction. Both courses are fatal to man's development. Neither the law of nature nor the Law of Shari'ah can be defied with impunity. That is why the Quran teaches that since all things are created for the service and benefit of man, their use is permissible to him save that he is restrained from putting them to uses which are definitely harmful. According to this principle, celibacy is viewed by Islam not as a virtue but as a vice. In the same way abstention from the use of clean articles of food, drink and dress is not a virtue but a vice, inasmuch as restrictions like this amount to a defiance of the law of nature and ingratitude in respect of divine bounties. It is equally a vice, however, to spend one's time wholly in the pursuit of these objects and to devote oneself completely to their enjoyment, for in this way a man neglects the development of his soul, which is the real object of human existence. As it is sinful for a man to go on working incessantly and to abstain from all nourishment—for thereby he will bring about his own death and will leave his work unfinished—in the same way it is sinful for a man to devote himself entirely to the fulfilment of his physical desires and to abstain from useful activities, for such a man spends his life in the pursuit of the means and neglects the end. No end can be achieved without the provision of means and appropriate means cannot be created without keeping the true end in view.

### **Principles to Establish Social Order**

To establish order in the social sphere and to give it a beneficent direction the Quran has laid down the following principles:

- (1) Absolute ownership vests in God alone and all things belong to Him.
- (2) He has subjected everything to the control of man for the collective benefit of the whole of mankind.
- (3) Since the object of man's existence is spiritual perfection, he must be given a certain amount of freedom of choice in his actions and must be provided with a field for his activities.
- (4) Since the materials upon which human progress is based are the common heritage of the whole of mankind, the produce of human labour must be so distributed as to secure their proper share both to the individual and to

the community.

(5) For the proper regulation of the human social system some person must be entrusted with executive authority who must be elected as the result of consultation among the members of the community over whom he is to exercise authority. His function is not to frame laws but to enforce divine laws.

(6) Keeping in view the possibility of diversity in the political systems of different communities the Quran teaches that:

(a) In case of a dispute arising between any two or more political states the others should combine to bring about a settlement of the dispute.

(b) If an amicable settlement is not arrived at between the parties to the dispute, the remaining states should pronounce an equitable award with reference to the matter which is the subject matter of the dispute.

(c) If either of the parties to the dispute refuses to accept the award or, having accepted it, fails to give effect to it, the remaining States should combine to persuade the recalcitrant State to accept the award in the interests of international peace. If persuasion fails, they should compel the government concerned by force to submit to the award.

(d) When the obdurate state has made its submission, the other governments should refrain from going beyond the enforcement of the award relating to the original dispute and should not seek to secure any advantages for themselves, for this would lay the foundation of fresh disputes.

All this was prescribed by the Quran more than 1350 years ago. The United Nations Organization has adopted some of these principles but is in danger of failing in its purpose for neglecting others. The League of Nations failed for the reason that it did not give effect to the Quranic principle that an intransigent government should be compelled by force to submit to an international decision or award. The United Nations Organization does not appear to be anxious to secure that the powers that enforce a settlement should not seek any advantage for themselves at the expense of the vanquished nations and should confine their efforts to the enforcement of the settlement of the dispute which gave rise to the conflict. It is feared, therefore, that the United Nations Organization will experience the same fate which overtook the League of Nations; for peace can only be established and maintained on the principles laid down in the Quran.

### **Life after Death**

The Quran teaches that on a man's death his soul enters a new universe and assumes a new body. That body is different from the physical body that is adjusted to the requirements of this life. It is a new kind of spiritual body possessing peculiar faculties for the perception of God's beautiful attributes.

Perfect souls will be admitted immediately to the state described as Paradise. Those imperfectly developed in this life will encounter the state described as Hell which is a state of healing for spiritual ills. As the process of healing is completed in respect of each soul, it will attain Paradise; till eventually all souls will have attained Paradise and the state of Hell will be altogether terminated. All, having proceeded from God, will eventually revert to Him. Their joys, their pleasures and their comforts will all be spiritual. The remembrance and the love of God will be their nourishment and the vision of God will be their highest reward. The Quran invites attention to this by saying that the extremities of this universe are in the hands of God (79:45). This means that the universe originated with God and will also terminate with Him. That which has proceeded from God will revert to God, as Jesus said: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven" (John, 3:13).

## **Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah**

The Quran expounds the principle that, as the perfect code of spiritual laws has been revealed through the Holy Prophet of Islam, no law-bearing Prophet shall appear after him. The Quran is the last revealed Scripture and is not liable to be superseded either wholly or in part by any subsequent revelation. The spiritual universe will continue to be ruled by the Quran and the Holy Prophet till the end of days. But man is liable to forget, is apt to fall into error and is prone to rebel. To maintain the dominion of the Quran it was necessary to provide a remedy for all these ills. Provision was necessary that the forgetful may be reminded, the erring set right and the rebellious brought to submission. We learn from the Quran that as in the material universe the moon obtains light from the sun and illumines the earth when the light of the sun is not directly available, in the same way men will continue to appear who will obtain spiritual light from the Holy Prophet and will continue to illumine the spiritual universe. These men, in accordance with the degree of the need which they are designed to fulfil, will appear in the shape of Reformers, but in the case of widespread disorder and mischief in the spiritual realm, would be appointed as the Prophet's subordinate, and in strict obedience to the Holy Prophet. The Quran indicates at various places the appearance of one such Prophet who would be the spiritual image of the Holy Prophet and whose advent would be regarded as the advent of the Holy Prophet himself. In the Traditions this image of the Holy Prophet has been given the name of Messiah and the Quran also at one place indicates the applicability of this name to him (43:58).

Another name mentioned in the traditions for this Prophet is Mahdi. Both these names, however, are applicable to the same individual, though they

express different capacities. The Gospels also refer to this second advent of the Holy Prophet by holding out the promise of the second advent of Jesus. The Signs mentioned in the earliest Scriptures and in the Quran which should indicate the time of the advent of this Prophet have been fulfilled in this age and it is a mighty proof of the truth of the Quran that, in accordance with the prophecies made in it, a man was raised by God in this age who claimed to be the spiritual image of the Holy Prophet and in whose advent the prophecies contained in the Quran and other Scriptures were fulfilled. He explained that God had raised him for the purpose of re-establishing the dominion of Islam and to shed light upon the true teachings of the Quran. This claimant was the late Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. Nearly 60 years ago he was informed through divine revelation that he had been appointed to serve Islam and the Holy Prophet and to work for the exaltation of God's name in the universe. He was told that God had conferred upon him the dignity of prophethood with this proviso that he would continue to be a perfect follower of the Holy Prophet and of the Quran and that the revelation which was vouchsafed to him would be subordinate to the Quran and would contain no new Law. One of his revelations was, "Every blessing is from Muḥammad and blessed is he who has taught," i.e. the Holy Prophet, "and blessed is he who has learnt," i.e. Aḥmad, who was the recipient of this revelation (*Haqīqatul-Wahī*). Again, he received a revelation: "A Warner has appeared in the world but the world did not accept him. God will, however, accept him and will establish his truth through mighty convulsions" (*Barāhīn-e-Aḥmadiyyah*). In the terminology of the Quran a warner means a Prophet and in one version of this revelation received by the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement the word used in place of "Warner" was Prophet (*Aik Ghalaṭī kā Izālāh*). His function was to bring man face to face with his Maker in this age of darkness and sow the seed of spiritual advancement in this material world through fresh Signs and revelations. When he first announced his claim he was alone and had no companion. He appeared in a small village of about 1,400 or 1,500 inhabitants which possessed no modern facility in the shape of a post-office, telegraph office or railway station. He announced then that God would establish his truth through mighty Signs and that his name would be carried to the farthest ends of the earth. In addition to the announcement that the Movement founded by him would be firmly established and would flourish and expand and that his followers would attain nearness to God, he further announced that within nine years of the date of the announcement a son would be born to him through whom many of his prophecies would be fulfilled and whose name would be carried to the ends of the earth. He would rapidly advance from success to success and would be blessed with the Holy Spirit. When Aḥmad published his claims and the

revelations received by him, he encountered a severe storm of opposition from all quarters and all communities. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians all combined in opposition to him and resolved to compass his ruin. This opposition was in itself an indication that the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement was divinely inspired, for such universal opposition is normally encountered only by true Prophets. In spite of the fact that he was alone and was opposed by all communities, God began to strengthen his voice and by ones and twos people began to believe in him. Gradually his followers spread in the Punjab and then through the other provinces of India and even outside.

## **The Messiah's Promised Son**

When the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement died in 1908, his opponents declared that the Movement would die a natural death. The Aḥmadiyya Community, however, gathered, in accordance with Islamic principles, to elect the late Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn as the First *Khalīfah*. During the First *Khilafat* some members of the Community who had been affected by Western ideas began to be critical of the institution of *Khilafat*. Their views found some support among a certain section of the Community with the result that when Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn died in 1914, a vigorous and concerted effort was made by this section to abolish the institution of *Khilafat* altogether. I, who am the son of Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement, was then only twenty-five years of age and was utterly devoid of all material resources. The executive organization of the Community was dominated by the section who had revolted against the institution of *Khilafat*. A very large majority of those members of the Community who were then present in Qadian and who were described as a mob by those who were in revolt against the *Khilafat*, were determined that they would maintain the institution in accordance with the principles laid down in the Quran and they insisted that I should take upon myself the burdens and responsibilities of the office of *Khalīfah*. In these circumstances I agreed to accept the allegiance of the Community as the Second *Khalīfah* and in that capacity began to serve the Community, Islam and humanity. Since the majority of those who were regarded as holders of leading positions in the Community were opposed to the institution of *Khilafat*, the Community was faced with a crisis. Outsiders began to speculate that the dissolution of the Community and its disintegration was a matter of only a few days. At that time God revealed to me that he would succour me and give me victory and create dissension among the ranks of my powerful opponents and would break them. A great miracle then came to pass. The majority of those who were regarded as the educated and experienced section of the Community deserted

it in the hour of its trial. Those who were regarded as men of substance and influence withdrew from it. Those who were looked upon as the intellect of the Community were cut off from it. Those who had revolted from the *Khilafat* began to proclaim that since the direction of the affairs of the Community had been committed into the hands of an inexperienced youth, the Movement would soon disintegrate. But the decrees of Him, Who had revealed the Quran and Who is the Author of the spiritual universe in accordance with the laws of which the world is progressing and Who had revealed to Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, that within nine years from 1884 he would be blessed with a son who would, under the Grace and Mercy of God, be known unto the ends of the earth and who would through the propagation of Islam become the instrument of the release of those held in bondage and of bringing into life those that were spiritually dead, were fulfilled and His word was exalted. Every day that dawned brought with it fresh factors that contributed to my success and every day that departed left behind elements that hastened the failure of my opponents. God thus made me the instrument of the spread of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in all parts of the earth. At each step He has blessed me with His guidance and on numerous occasions He has honoured me with His revelation. Then the day arrived when He revealed to me that I was the Promised Son, the tidings of whose advent had been proclaimed by the Promised Messiah in 1884, five years before my birth. From that day the volume of God's support and succour began to swell even faster and today Aḥmadiyya Missionaries are fighting the battles of Islam in every continent. The Quran, which had become like a closed book in the hands of the Muslims, has again been made an open book for us by God through the blessings of the Holy Prophet and the instrumentality of the Promised Messiah. Fresh sources of knowledge are revealed to us through it. Whenever any teaching or doctrine contained in the Quran is made the target of criticism on the basis of some new scientific development, God reveals to me the true answer contained in the Quran. We have been chosen as the instrument for elevating the banner of the dominion of the Quran. Deriving faith and certainty from the words and the revelations of God, we are demonstrating the superiority of the Quran to the world. Compared with the resources of the world our resources are pitiful. Yet we are assured that in spite of the severest opposition, the dominion of the Quran will be firmly established. The sun may move out of its course, the stars may leave their appointed places, the earth may stop in its revolution, but nothing and nobody can now obstruct the victory of Islam and the Holy Prophet. The dominion of the Quran will be established once more. Men will turn away from the worship of other men and of gods which they have fashioned with their own hands and will bow down in worship to the One God. In spite of the



fact that the trend of human society appears to be in directions opposed to the teachings of the Quran, the Kingdom of Islam will be established again and so firmly that men will find it impossible to shake its foundations. God has sown a beneficent seed in the wilderness of the world that has been laid waste by Satan, and I proclaim that this seed will germinate and shoot up in the form of a tree which will spread and bring forth abundant fruit. The souls that aspire to soar high and are animated by longing to be united with God shall one day be roused and weaned from dreams of material prosperity and will be inspired with a passion to alight on the branches of this tree. All disorder shall then disappear and all travail shall be brought to an end. God's Kingdom shall be re-established on earth and God's love shall again become man's most valuable treasure. This revolution shall usher in an era of peace and order. All efforts to bring peace to the world and to remove disorder which are at variance with these principles shall be brought to nought.

## **Translations into other Languages**

The Quran directed the Prophet to carry on his greatest struggle with the help of the Quran, which was the most effective weapon for this purpose (25:53). It is in pursuance of this direction of the Quran that this volume of the English Translation is being published. It is expected that the publication of the remaining portion of the English Translation will not be long delayed. Besides the English Translation, translations in the following seven European languages have been completed and will be published as soon as post-war restrictions permit: Russian, German, Dutch, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Thereafter it is hoped that this series will be continued till it comprises translations into all the principal languages. A translation into Swahili is already under preparation.

Missions of the Ahmadiyya Movement have been established in various parts of the world for the purpose of the propagation of Islam and the exposition of the teachings of the Quran. There is a central Mission in England and Missions are also working in France, Spain, Italy and Switzerland. On the American continent, there are Missions in U.S.A. and the Argentine and plans are being pushed forward for opening Missions in Canada and Brazil. Missions have been established in all the countries of British West Africa and ten Missionaries are working in different parts of British East Africa. Missionary activities are also being carried on in Egypt, Sudan and Abyssinia. There are Missions in Palestine, Syria and Iran in the Middle East, and in Malaya, Java, Sumatra and Borneo in South East Asia. We believe that these translations and Missions will inaugurate a successful campaign for the triumph of Islam, for not only are our efforts directed

towards carrying into effect that which has already been decreed by God, but have been undertaken in obedience to God's command.

In addition to offering this intellectual gift we invite the attention of all lovers of truth, to whatever religion they might profess allegiance, to the golden principle that a tree is known by its fruit. The Quran yields its fruits in every age and those who are devoted to it become the recipients of divine revelation and God manifests His powers through them. Why should we not, in our search for the truth, seek assistance not only from reason and reflection but also from our observation of the fruits that other Scriptures yield? The world would be materially assisted in its search for truth if Christians could persuade the Pope or other high Church dignitaries to put forward the revelations received by them as against those received by me for the purpose of determining which of them are true manifestations of God's power and knowledge. The Pope and other ecclesiastics whose predecessors, in defiance of the pacific teachings of Jesus, were ever eager to incite Christendom to undertake Crusades against Muslim States, should be only too eager to embrace the opportunity of participating in this spiritual crusade. If they were inclined to accept, or could be persuaded by their followers to accept, this invitation, it might prove an effective means for healing the spiritual ills from which mankind has so long suffered. The Majesty and Power of God would then manifest itself in an extraordinary manner and would help to establish the faith of man and guide his spiritual development,

## Acknowledgements

In conclusion I desire to acknowledge the inestimable services rendered by Maulawī Sher 'Alī, B.A., who has in spite of feeble and failing health, devoted so large a portion of his time to the translation of the text into English. I also wish to thank him along with Mirzā Bashīr Aḥmad, M.A., Malik Ghulām Farīd, M.A., and the late Ch. Abul-Hāshim Khān, M.A., for the labour they have devoted to extracting from my speeches and writings the material upon which the Explanatory Notes are based and to preparing these Notes. I have not had the opportunity of perusing these notes but, having regard to the experience and devotion of these gentlemen, I am sure they must have interpreted correctly that which I have through divine grace been able to acquire in this behalf directly from the Quran or the teachings of the Promised Messiah. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Qādī Muḥammad Aslam, M.A., Professor, Government College, Lahore, and Sir Muḥammad Zafrullah Khān, who have rendered this general Introduction from Urdu into English. I pray that God may anoint all of them and their descendants with the perfume of His blessings and should watch over them and help them both in this life and the next. Amen!

I also desire to state that since I was a pupil of the late Maulawī Nūr-ud-Dīn, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ I, a good deal of what I acquired from him is reflected in the Explanatory Notes. Thus these Notes are, in fact, based upon the interpretation of the Quran by the Promised Messiah, the First *Khalīfah* and myself. Since God had anointed the Promised Messiah with His Spirit and had honoured him by bestowing upon him such knowledge as was requisite for the development of this and succeeding generations, I trust that this commentary will serve to heal many of their ills. By means of it the blind shall see, the deaf shall hear, the dumb shall speak, the lame and the halt shall walk, and God's angels shall so bless it that it shall succeed in fulfilling the object for which it is being published. Do Thou, o Lord, ordain that it be so!

QADIAN,

28th February, 1947.

6th Rabī'uth-Thānī, 1366.

28th Tablīgh, 1326.

MIRZĀ BASHĪR-UD-DĪN MAḤMŪD AḤMAD  
(Khalīfatul-Masīḥ II)



# CHAPTER 1

## AL-FĀTIḤAH

(Revealed before Hijrah)

### Place and Time of Revelation

As reported by many traditionists, the whole of this chapter was revealed at Mecca, and formed part of the Muslim prayers since the very beginning. The chapter has been referred to in the Quranic verse, *We have indeed given thee the seven oft-repeated verses and the Great Quran* (15:88), which was admittedly revealed at Mecca. According to some reports, the chapter was also revealed a second time at Medina. The time of its first revelation, however, must be placed very early in the Prophet's career.

### Names of this Chapter and their Significance

The best-known name of this short chapter, i.e. *Fātiḥatul-Kitāb* (the Opening Chapter of the Book), is reported on the authority of several reliable traditionists (Tirmidhī & Muslim). The name was later abbreviated into *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah*, or simply *Al-Fātiḥah*.

The chapter has been called by quite a number of names, out of which the following ten are more authentic: *Al-Fātiḥah*, *Aṣ-Ṣalāt*, *Al-Ḥamd*, *Ummul-Qur'ān*, *Al-Qur'ānul-'Aẓīm*, *As-Sab'al-Mathānī*, *Ummul-Kitāb*, *Ash-Shifā'*, *Ar-Ruqīyyah* and *Al-Kanz*.

These names throw a flood of light upon the extensive import of the chapter.

The name *Fātiḥatul-Kitāb* (the Opening Chapter of the Book) implies that the chapter is to be placed in the beginning of the Quran and that it serves as a key to its meaning.

*Aṣ-Ṣalāt* (the Prayer) signifies that the chapter forms a perfect prayer and is an integral part of the institutional prayers of Islam.

*Al-Ḥamd* (the Praise) signifies that the chapter brings to light the lofty purpose of man's creation and teaches that the relation of God to man is one of grace and mercy.

*Ummul-Qur'ān* (Mother of the Quran) signifies that the chapter contains the essence of the whole of the Quran, providing man in a nutshell with all the knowledge that has a bearing on his moral and spiritual welfare.

*Al-Qur'ānul-'Aẓīm* (the Great Quran) signifies that although the chapter is known as the *Ummul-Kitāb* and *Ummul-Qur'ān*, it is nevertheless a part of the Quran and not separate from it, as has been supposed by some.

*As-Sab'al-Mathānī* (the Oft-repeated Seven Verses) signifies that the seven short verses of the chapter virtually answer all the spiritual needs of man. It also signifies that the chapter must be repeated in every *rak'at* of Prayer.

*Ummul-Kitāb* (Mother of the Book) signifies that the prayer contained in the chapter has been the cause of the revelation of the Quranic dispensation.

*Ash-Shifā'* (the Cure) signifies that it provides remedy for all doubts and misgivings.

*Ar-Ruqīyyah* (the Charm) signifies that the chapter is not only a prayer to ward off disease but also provides protection against the Satan and his followers and strengthens the heart of man against them.

*Al-Kanz* (the Treasure) signifies that the chapter is an unlimited treasure of knowledge.

### **Al-Fātiḥah referred to in a Prophecy of the New Testament**

The best-known name of the chapter, however, is *Al-Fātiḥah*. It is interesting to note that this very name occurs in a New Testament prophecy. In Rev. 10:1-2 it is written: "I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven...and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." The Hebrew word for *open* is *fatoah* which is the same as the Arabic word *fātiḥah*. Revelation 10:3 states: "...And when he [the angel] had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices." The seven thunders represent the seven verses of this chapter. Christian scholars admit that the prophecy refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ, and this has been established by actual facts. The Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad—who claimed to have fulfilled the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus—constantly had in his hands the little chapter *Al-Fātiḥah*, and wrote several commentaries on it. He deduced arguments of his truth from its contents, often referred to it in his speeches and writings, and always used it as a model prayer, exhorting his disciples to do the same. He deduced from the seven short verses of this chapter truths which were previously unknown. It was as if the chapter had been a sealed book until its treasures were discovered by Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy contained in Rev. 10:4: "And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." This prophecy referred to the fact that the *Fatoah* or *Al-Fātiḥah* would, for a time, remain a closed book, but a time would come when it would become open and manifest.

### **Subject Matter**

This chapter contains the essence of the entire Quranic teaching. It comprises, in outline, all the subjects dealt with at length in the body of the Quran. The chapter starts with a description of the fundamental attributes of God which is the pivot around which all the other divine attributes revolve, and is the basis of the operation of the universe and of the relations between

God and man. *Rabb* (the Creator, Sustainer and Developer), *Raḥmān* (the Gracious), *Raḥīm* (the Merciful) and *Mālik-e-Yaumid-Dīn* (Master of the Day of Judgement)—these attributes signify that after creating man God endowed him with the best capacities and capabilities, and provided the means and material needed for his physical, social, moral and spiritual development. Further, He made a provision that all labours and endeavours of man should have an ample reward.

The chapter goes on to say that man has been created for '*Ibādah*', i.e. the worship of God and the attainment of His nearness, and that he constantly needs His help for the fulfilment of this supreme object of his creation.

Then we have a comprehensive prayer in which all the urges of the human soul find full expression. The prayer teaches us that we should always seek and invoke the assistance of God that He may provide us with the means required for our success in this life and the life to come. And as man is apt to derive strength and encouragement from the good example of those noble and great souls who led successful lives in the past, he is taught to pray that just as by God's help and assistance those righteous and God-fearing people achieved the object of their life, and their labours were crowned with success, God should open up for him also avenues of moral and spiritual progress.

Finally, the prayer contains a warning that after having been led to the right path, man sometimes strays away from it, loses sight of his goal, and becomes estranged from his Creator. We are taught to remain always on our guard and constantly seek God's protection against any possible estrangement from Him.

This is the subject which is put in a nutshell in *Al-Fātiḥah*, and this is the subject with which the Quran deals fully and comprehensively, citing numerous examples for the guidance of the reader.

## **Relation to the Rest of the Quran**

The chapter is an introduction to the Quran. It is an epitome of the whole Book. Thus, at the very beginning of his study, the reader knows in broad outline the subjects he should expect to find in the Quran. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the chapter *Al-Fātiḥah* is the most important of the chapters of the Quran (Bukhārī).

## **A Prayer that Must Precede the Recitation of the Quran**

Muslims are bidden always to begin the reading of the Holy Book with a short prayer, soliciting God's protection against Satan. God says in 16:99: *When thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected.* Here, refuge or protection implies: (1) that no evil should befall us; (2) that no good should escape us; and (3) that after we have attained goodness, we may not relapse into evil.

Thus, by seeking the protection of God while reciting the Quran we pray, *firstly*, that we may not miss any teaching of the Quran through weakness or negligence or in consequence of our sins, or under the influence of evil company; *secondly*, that we may not fail to correctly understand it any teaching of the Quran; *thirdly*, that, having understood it, we may not relapse into ignorance. The prescribed words for the prayer are: اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم "I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected," which must precede every recitation of the Quran.

### **The Meaning and Significance of the Word *Sūrah***

A chapter of the Quran, and there are 114 of them, is called a *Sūrah*. The word *Sūrah* rendered into English as 'chapter' means: (1) rank and eminence; (2) a mark or sign; (3) an elevated and beautiful edifice; and (4) something full and complete (Aqrab & Qurṭubī). The chapters of the Quran are called *Sūrahs* because, (a) one is exalted in rank by reading them and attains through them eminence; (b) they serve as marks for the beginning and the end of the different subjects dealt with in the Quran; (c) they are each like a noble spiritual edifice, and (d) each of them contains a complete theme.

The name *Sūrah* for such a division has been used by the Quran itself as in 2:24 and 24:2. It has been used in Ḥadīth also. Says the Holy Prophet: "Just now a *Sūrah* has been revealed to me and it runs as follows" (Muslim). From this, it is clear that the name *Sūrah* for a division of the Quran has been in use from the very beginning and is not a later innovation.





## (AL-FĀTIḤAH)

1. <sup>a</sup>In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.<sup>1</sup> بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

<sup>a</sup>Placed before every chapter except ch.9; also in 27:31. See also 96:2.

### 1. Important Words:

ب (in) occurring here in combination with اسم is a particle used to convey a number of meanings, the one more applicable here being that of 'with'. The compound word بسم therefore would mean 'with the name of.' According to the Arab usage, the words *iqra'* or *aqra'u* or *naqra'u* or *ishra'* or *ashra'u* or *nashra'u* would be taken to be understood before بسم الله. The expression بسم الله would thus mean 'begin with the name of Allah' or 'recite with the name of Allah,' or 'I or we begin with the name of Allah.' or 'I or we recite with the name of Allah.' In the translation the words بسم الله have been rendered as "in the name of Allah", which is a more familiar form (Lane).

اسم (name), which is derived either from وسم (a mark) or سمو (height), means a name or attribute (Aqrab). Here it is used in both senses; for, firstly, it refers to 'Allah' which is the personal name of God; and, secondly, it refers to *Ar-Raḥmān* (Gracious) and *Ar-Raḥīm* (Merciful) which are His attributive names.

الله (Allah) is the name of the Supreme Being, Who is the sole possessor of all perfect attributes and is free from all defects. In the Arabic

language, the word *Allah* is never used for any other thing or being. No other language has a distinctive name for the Supreme Being. The names found in other languages are all attributive or descriptive and are often used in the plural, but the word "Allah" is never used in the plural number. It is a simple substantive, not derived. It is never used as a qualifying word. Hence, in the absence of a parallel word in the English language, the original name "Allah" has been retained throughout the translation.

This view is corroborated by eminent authorities of the Arabic language. Lane says: "الله (Allah) according to the most correct of the opinions respecting it is a proper name, applied to the Being, Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection, the ال (al) being inseparable from it" (Arabic-English Lexicon). For a fuller discussion of the word 'Allah,' the reader is referred to *Tafsīr-e-Kabīr* by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Head of the Aḥmadiyya Community.

الرحمن (Gracious) and الرحيم (Merciful) are both derived from the same root رحم meaning, he showed mercy; he was kind and good; he

forgave. The word *رحمة* combines the idea of *رقة* i.e. 'tenderness' and *احسان* i.e. 'goodness' (Mufradāt). *الرحمن* is in the measure of *فعلان* and *الرحيم* in the measure of *فعليل*. According to the rules of the Arabic language, the larger the number of letters added to the root word, the more extensive or more intensive does the meaning become (Kashshāf). The measure of *فعلان* thus conveys the idea of fullness and extensiveness, while the measure of *فعليل* denotes the idea of repetition and giving liberal reward to those who deserve it (Muḥīṭ). Thus the word *الرحمن* would denote "mercy comprehending the entire universe," whereas the word *الرحيم* would denote "a mercy limited in its scope but shown repeatedly".

In view of the above, *الرحمان* is One Who shows mercy gratuitously and extensively to all creation without regard to effort or work, and *الرحيم* is One Who shows mercy in response to, and as a result of, the actions of man but shows it liberally and repeatedly. The former is applicable only to God, while the latter is applied to man also. The former extends not only to the believers and unbelievers but to the whole creation; the latter applies mostly to the believers. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: *الرحمان رحمان الدنيا و الرحيم رحيم الآخرة* i.e. the attribute *الرحمن* generally pertains to this life, while the attribute *الرحيم* generally pertains to the life to come (Muḥīṭ), meaning that as this world is mostly the world of actions and the next a world where actions will be particularly rewarded,

God's attribute of *الرحمن* provides man with material for his works in this life, whereas His attribute of *الرحيم* brings about results in the life to come.

The abundance of everything which we enjoy in this life, which is indeed all a favour of God, is provided for us before we do anything to deserve it or even before we are born, while the blessings in store for us in the life to come will be given to us as a reward of our actions. This shows that *الرحمن* is the Bestower of gifts which precede our birth, while *الرحيم* is the giver of blessings which follow our deeds as their reward.

### Commentary:

(i) The verse *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* is the first verse of every chapter of the Quran, except the chapter *Barā'ah*, which, however, is not an independent chapter but a continuation of the chapter *Anfāl*. There is a saying reported by Ibn 'Abbās to the effect that whenever any new chapter was revealed, *Bismillāh* was the first verse to be revealed, and without *Bismillāh* the Holy Prophet did not know that a new chapter had begun (Dāwūd). This ḥadīth goes to prove that (1) the verse *Bismillāh* is part of the Quran and not something supernumerary and (2) that the chapter *Barā'at* is not an independent chapter. It also refutes the belief expressed by some that *Bismillāh* is a part only of *Al-Fātiḥah* and not of all the Quranic chapters. Such views are further refuted by the ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, definitely, that the verse *Bismillāh* is a part of all the

Quranic chapters (Bukhārī & Quṭnī).

(ii) The Holy Prophet attached great importance to the verse *Bismillāh*. He is reported to have said that any important work which is done without reciting *Bismillāh* is apt to prove devoid of God's blessings. Thus, it is a general practice among Muslims to commence every work with a recital of this prayer.

(iii) The place of this verse in the beginning of every chapter has the following significance:

1. The Quran is a treasure of divine knowledge to which access cannot be had without the special favour of God. In 56:80 God says regarding the Quran: *None shall touch it except those who are purified*, meaning that except the favoured ones who have been purified by the hand of God, none shall grasp the deeper meaning of the Quran. Thus *Bismillāh* has been placed at the beginning of each chapter to remind the reader that in order to have access to and benefit from the treasures of divine knowledge contained in the Quran, he should not only approach it with pure motives but also constantly invoke the help of God and try to lead a righteous life.

2. In the Old Testament (Deut. 18:18, 19) we read: "I will raise them (the Israelites) up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee (Moses), and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my

name, I will require it of him." As the Holy Prophet of Islam was raised in the likeness of Moses (Quran, 73:16), so in fulfilment of the above prophecy God so ordained that each time a new *Sūrah* was revealed, it was begun by the words: *In the name of Allah*. This meant that every chapter of the Quran, i.e. every new proclamation made by God through the Holy Prophet, should commence with this verse so that on the one hand the prophecy made by Moses might be fulfilled and on the other, there might be a constant repetition of the warning to the Jews and Christians that if they hearkened not to the words of the new Prophet, they would be answerable to God.

3. In the Old Testament, we also read: "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die" (Deut. 18:20). The verse *Bismillāh* (in the name of God) has, therefore, been placed at the beginning of every chapter of the Quran so that the fact might be brought home to the Jews and Christians in particular and to other peoples in general that the success which attended the career of the Holy Prophet was a positive proof of the fact that all that he spoke was spoken by the command of God; for if it had been otherwise, he would surely have met with early destruction. The verse *Bismillāh* is thus a standing challenge to the Jews and Christians, and every time it is repeated at the head of a chapter it serves as an argument for

the truth of the Holy Prophet. This result could not have been attained if the verse had been put only in the beginning of the Quran.

4. The verse *Bismillāh* placed before every chapter of the Quran also serves another important purpose. It is a key to the meaning of each individual chapter. This is so because all questions affecting moral and spiritual matters are related in one way or another with these fundamental divine attributes: *Raḥmāniyyat* (grace) and *Raḥīmiyyat* (mercy). Thus each chapter is, in fact, a detailed exposition of some aspect of the divine attributes mentioned in the verse.

(iv) Some Christian writers have raised the objection that the formula of *Bismillāh* has been borrowed from earlier Scriptures, insinuating that it cannot therefore be of Divine origin. Wherry, in his commentary has expressed the opinion that it has been borrowed from the Zend-Avesta where it has the form:

گرام ایزد بخشائنده و بخشائش گر i.e. With the name of God, Forgiving, Kind. A similar objection has been raised by Sale. Rodwell, however, has expressed the opinion that the Quran borrowed the formula from the Jews, among whom it was in vogue and from whom its use was borrowed by pre-Islamic Arabs. Both these criticisms are wrong and beside the point; for *firstly* it has never been claimed by the Muslims that the formula in this or similar form was not known before the revelation of the Quran; *secondly* it is wrong to argue that the formula could not be of

Divine origin even if it was sometimes used by the pre-Islamic peoples in an identical or similar form before its revelation in the Quran. As a matter of fact, the Quran itself states that Solomon used the phrase in his letter to the Queen of Sheba (27:31). What Muslims claim—and this claim has never been refuted—is that the Quran was the first Scripture to use the formula in the way it did [see (iii) above]. It is also wrong to say that the formula was in common vogue among pre-Islamic Arabs, for it is well known that Arabs had an aversion to the use of the name *Ar-Raḥmān* for God. Again, if such formulae for the praise of God were known before, it only goes to corroborate the truth of the Quranic teaching that there has not been a people to whom a Teacher has not been sent (35:25), and that the Quran is a repository of all permanent truths contained in the previous Books (98:4). It adds much more, of course, and, whatever it adopts, it improves its form or use or both.

(v) It has been asked why the word اسم (name) has been used before the word الله (Allah) in the verse *Bismillāh*. This may be explained in a number of ways:

1. In the Arabic language the particle ب is used not only to signify connection or invoke help, but also in swearing. So if the word اسم had been dropped, the phrase بالله (*billāh*) might have meant "I swear by Allah." The introduction of اسم (name) removes this ambiguity.

2. God being the source of all

2. "All praise belongs to Allah,  
Lord of all the worlds,<sup>2</sup>

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

<sup>a</sup>6:2; 6:46; 10:11; 18:2; 29:64; 30:19; 31:26; 34:2; 35:2; 37:183; 39:76; 45:37.

goodness, even the invoking of His names proves a blessing. Says the Quran (55:79): *Blessed be the name of thy Lord, the Owner of Majesty and Honour*. The Holy Prophet sometimes healed people by invoking the various names of God. Therefore, the word اسم (name) has been added in order to remind the Faithful that to remember the names of God is to merit a blessing.

3. The use of the word "name" further indicates that God is hidden and can be known only through His names, i.e. attributes. By reciting *Bismillāh*, a believer seeks the help of God through His attributes of *Ar-Rahmān* and *Ar-Rahīm*.

4. Again, the inner meanings of the Quran are a guarded treasure and nobody can have access to them, except under proper authority. The person who begins a recitation with the formula, *In the name of Allah*, says, as it were, to the guardian angels of this spiritual treasure, "I am approaching it in the name of Allah, so open to me the treasures of the inner meanings of the Quran." To the one who approaches the Quran in such a spirit, the treasures will indeed be opened. The verse, *None shall touch it except those who are purified* (56:80), likewise, shows that only the pure in spirit can find access to the deep secrets of the Quran.

5. Another reason for introducing the word "name" in *Bismillāh* is to

draw attention to the prophecy of Moses (Deut. 18:18-20) to which reference has already been made.

## 2. Important Words:

ال (Al) is more or less like the definite article 'the' of the English language. It is used to convey a number of senses one of which is that of totality. So الحمد would mean, all kinds of praise.

حمد (praise). They say حمده i.e. he praised him. Thus حمد means 'praise'. There are four words in Arabic which are used, in varying significance, in the sense of praise or thankfulness; viz. شكر, ثنا, مدح and حمد. Of these God has here chosen the last. *Shukr*, when used about man, expresses recognition of and thankfulness for benefits received, whereas *Hamd* not only embodies the idea of thankfulness but also makes reference to the intrinsic qualities of the object of praise. *Thanā* indicates an idea of publicity, the root meaning of the word being repetition. The emphasis in *Thanā* is more on publicity than on personal experience. *Madḥ* gives a somewhat similar meaning as *Hamd* but whereas *Madḥ* may be false, *Hamd* is always true. Says the Holy Prophet: احموا التراب في وجوه المداحين i.e. "Throw dust in the faces of those who praise falsely." Again *Madḥ* may be used about such acts of goodness over which the doer has no control, but *Hamd* is used only about such acts as

are volitional (Mufradāt). *Ḥamd* also implies admiration, magnifying and honouring of the object of praise, and lowliness, humility and submissiveness in the person who offers it (Lane). Thus *Ḥamd* was the most appropriate word to be used here, where a reference to the intrinsic goodness and truly merited praise and glorification of God is intended. In common usage the word *Ḥamd* has come to be applied exclusively to God.

رب (Lord). رب الشيء means: he gathered together the thing; he owned the thing. رب القيوم means: he ruled over the people and administered their affairs. رب النعمة means: he increased and developed the favour. رب الامر means: he improved and completed the matter. رب الصبي means: he sustained and looked after the child till he was of age. رب means, lord, master or owner; one to whom obedience is due; one who reforms; one who sustains and develops (Aqrab & Lisān); one who brings to perfection by degrees (Mufradāt). رب also means: Creator (Muḥīṭ). When used in combination with some other word, the word may be used for others besides God, as we say رب البيت i.e. the owner of the house (Lane).

العالم (worlds) is the plural of العالم which is derived from علم i.e. he knew. علم ('alama) means, he put a mark or sign on it. العلم means: the proper name by which a person or thing is known; flag or banner; sign; minaret. العالم primarily means, that by means of which one knows a thing. Hence, the word has come to be applied to all

beings or things by means of which one is able to know the Creator (Aqrab). The word is applied not only to all kinds of created beings or things but also to their classes collectively, so that one says عالم الانس i.e. the world of mankind, or عالم الحيوان i.e. the animal kingdom. The word *al-ālamīn* is not used to denote rational beings—men and angels—only. The Quran applies the word to all created things (26:24-29 & 41:10). Sometimes, of course, it is used in a restricted sense. Thus in 25:2 it is used in the sense of 'mankind' only and not in the sense of 'all created things.' In 2:123 it is used in a still more restricted sense, meaning not all mankind but only the people of the age.

In the verse under comment the word is used in its widest sense and signifies 'all that is besides Allah', i.e. both those that have life and those that have not, including heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.

### Commentary:

The believer is taught to say, *All praise belongs to Allah*, and not "I praise Allah" or "we praise Allah." The sentence الحمد لله (all praise belongs to Allah) denotes much more than الحمد لله (I praise Allah), because man can praise God only according to his knowledge, but الحمد لله (all praise belongs to Allah) comprises not only the praise which man knows, but also the praise which he does not know, to be God's due. God is worthy of praise at all times, independently of man's imperfect knowledge or realization. Moreover, if the expression الحمد لله (I praise Allah) had been used, it would

have implied that man, a finite being, can completely comprehend the infinite, an implication which is obviously wrong.

The word الحمد is an infinitive and as such can be interpreted both subjectively and objectively. Interpreted subjectively الحمد لله would mean that God alone has the right to bestow true praise. No other being is entitled to give such praise, owing to his limited knowledge. Interpreted objectively, it would signify that true praise is due to God alone. The praise due to other beings and objects is only borrowed and secondary. It is God Who provides everything and grants all powers and capacities. Therefore, when a person or thing is praised, it is really God to Whom the praise belongs, the person or thing being entitled to it only secondarily.

The verse, *All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds*, conveys, among others, the following meanings:

1. Allah is free from all blemishes and possesses all perfect attributes.

2. He alone is fully aware of the real nature of all things. The truth of this statement is verified by the daily multiplying discoveries of science which go to prove how inadequate human knowledge ever remains.

3. God can be entitled to "all praise" only when He is believed to be رب العالمين i.e. Lord of all the worlds and if He is Lord of all the worlds, then His providence must not only be universal but must extend to both the physical and the spiritual worlds. From the above it follows that no

people must remain deprived of God's spiritual blessings and all must have their share. Therefore, if any revelation is meant for a particular people, other peoples must have separate revelations to guide them, as was the case in pre-Islamic times. On the contrary, if, at a certain time, separate revelations are not sent for different peoples and only one revelation is sent, that revelation must claim to be universal, affording equal opportunities to all peoples, as is the case with Islam; otherwise, God cannot be looked upon as "Lord of all the worlds", nor can He be considered to be entitled to "all praise". In fact, the belief that revelation is the privilege of a particular people to the exclusion of all others who cannot claim any share in it, is false and repugnant to God's universal providence as well as to His entitlement to all praise.

4. The powers and faculties with which man is endowed are all gifts of God. So it is He Who is deserving of praise for any good that may be done by man.

5. By linking up the clause "all praise belongs to Allah" with the phrase "Lord of all the worlds" God has drawn our attention to the fact that one man's good is really linked to, and dependent on, the good of all mankind. A true believer should, therefore, look not only to his own good but to the good of all. One who does not do so has failed to grasp the true spirit of Islam and the universality of God's providence. Happiness for one lies in happiness for all.

3. <sup>a</sup>The Gracious, <sup>b</sup>the Merciful,<sup>3</sup>

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

<sup>a</sup>25:61; 26:6; 41:3; 55:2; 59:23. <sup>b</sup>33:44; 36:59.

6. The phrase رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Lord of all the worlds) also points out that as things which grow, develop and change cannot do so by themselves, so is all life subject to God's lordship.

The phrase further points to a law of evolution in the world, that things undergo development and that this development is progressive and is brought about in stages, *Rabb* being the One Who makes things grow and develop by stages.

The verse also points out that the principle of evolution is not inconsistent with belief in God. On the contrary, the progressive development of things makes creation all the more marvellous and God all the more deserving of praise. It must, however, be noted that the process of evolution referred to here is not identical with the theory of evolution as ordinarily understood; the expression is used here only in a general sense.

7. Again, the verse points to the fact that man has been created for unlimited progress, because the phrase رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ implies that God develops everything from a lower to a higher stage, and this can be true only if there is a stage beyond every stage in a never-ending process.

8. Finally, by putting the verse الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ in the very beginning of the Quran, a declaration is made that the time of separate revelations has come to an end, and that God is now

going to bestow a universal revelation upon the world. When separate Prophets were raised for separate nations, ignorant people, not understanding the purpose of God, rejected the Prophets of other nations; but, with the advent of Islam, one Prophet and one religion were given to all mankind, and the different peoples inhabiting the world—white, yellow, brown and black—were all invited to sing one common hymn in praise of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.

### 3. Important Words:

For the meanings of the words *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm* see note under 1:1.

### Commentary:

In the verse *Bismillāh* the attributes of *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm* serve as a key to the meaning of the chapter at the head of which they have been placed. Their mention here in the third verse serves an additional purpose. Here they are used as a link between the attribute of رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ which precedes and that of مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ which follows them. As we have seen, the phrase رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Lord of all the worlds) also implies that after creating things, God leads them progressively to higher stages of development. In the words الرَّحْمَنُ and الرَّحِيمُ occurring in the present verse, light is thrown on the process of that development. The word *Ar-Raḥmān* means that God not only provides all



#### 4. <sup>a</sup>Master of the <sup>b</sup>Day of Judgement.<sup>4</sup>

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ط

<sup>a</sup>7:159; 48:15. <sup>b</sup>51:13; 74:47; 82:18, 19; 83:7.

the necessary means, but also all the faculties needed for the development of man; and the word *Ar-Raḥīm* signifies that when man makes proper use of the means and faculties bestowed upon him, God not only rewards his labours but also inspires him with a desire for further good actions, thus opening unending avenues of progress and development for him.

The attribute of *Ar-Raḥmān* rules out the doctrine of Atonement, because *Ar-Raḥmān* signifies that God can bestow unearned favours on His creatures, whereas the doctrine of Atonement is based on the belief that God is, as it were, bound to treat men only according to their merits. Islam teaches that God is bound by no such restrictions. He possesses the power to forgive sins and treat His servants as He likes, because, being *Ar-Raḥmān*, He can reward a person beyond his deficiencies.

The attribute of *Ar-Raḥīm*, on the other hand, rules out the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. This doctrine is born of the idea that actions of man in this life, being limited, cannot bring him everlasting salvation. The attribute of *Ar-Raḥīm* shows that by liberally rewarding man's labours, God creates in him the desire to repeat his good actions, repetition of good works resulting in a repetition of rewards and so on without end.

Misunderstanding arises from the fact that supporters of the doctrine of transmigration look upon Heaven as a place of inaction. To them salvation means *Nirvana* or cessation of all desire and action. The words رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) emphatically deny this view. As the next life is also a creation of God, the attribute of *Rabb* will continue to operate therein as well. Man's spiritual progress will not end with death. On the contrary, he will go on doing good works in the next life, and God, the *Ar-Raḥīm*, will continue to reward those works. Spiritual progress will therefore go on forever. The possibility of dropping behind as well as forging ahead exists only in this world; in the next there will be no dropping behind but only forging ahead. Effort and action and, therefore, progress will continue forever. So the question about unlimited reward for the limited action does not arise.

#### 4. Important Words:

مالك (Master) is derived from ملك. They say ملك الشيء meaning: he owned the thing and possessed the right of doing with it what he liked. ملك القوم means: he gained complete dominion over the people. ملك (malak) which, according to some authorities, is derived from the same root, means 'an angel.' ملك (malik) means: king or ruler. مالك means: master or one who possesses the right of ownership over a thing and has the

power to deal with it as one likes (Aqrab).

يوم (Day) means (1) time absolutely, whether day or night, short or long; (2) day from sunrise till sunset; (3) present time or now; (4) ايام الله means, God's favours and punishments (Aqrab & Lane). The Quran says: *Verily a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of what you reckon* (22:48). At another place (70:5) the Quran uses the word to indicate fifty thousand years. At yet another place the Quran says: اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم i.e. *Now have I perfected your religion for you* (5:4). Here اليوم simply means 'now.'

دين (Judgement) is derived from دان. They say دانته meaning: he rewarded or recompensed him; he became his master and set him to any task he liked; he judged him; he obeyed him. دان بالاسلام means: he adopted Islam as his religion (Aqrab). Thus the word دين is used in several different senses, e.g. (1) recompense or requital; (2) judgement or reckoning; (3) dominion or government; (4) obedience; (5) religion (Lane). The word has been used in the Quran in all these different senses: see 37:54; 24:3; 12:77; 5:4; 4:126.

### Commentary:

Generally, this verse is understood to mean that God is the Master of the Day of Judgement. But it has a wider significance; for although the last and the perfect reckoning will take place on the Day of Judgement, the process of requital is going on even in this life. In its wider significance, therefore, the verse would mean that

God, Master of the Day of Judgement, is also Master of the period and process of reckoning in this life as well as in the next. There is, however, one difference. In this life human actions are often also judged and rewarded by other men—kings, rulers, superiors, etc.; and there is, therefore, always the possibility of error. On the Day of Judgement, however, the mastery of God will be exclusive and absolute and the work of requital will lie entirely in His hands. There will be no error, no undue punishments, and no undue rewards. The verse points out that in spite of the fact that God is the Master of the time of requital, both in this world and the world to come, He has been spoken of in this verse as the Master of the Day of Judgement so that it may be emphasized that on the Day of Judgement He will be the Sole Master.

The use of the word مالك (Master) in the verse is also intended to point to the fact that God is not like a judge who is bound to give his judgement strictly in accordance with a prescribed law. But, being Master, He can forgive and show mercy wherever and in whatever manner He may like.

The use of the word "Master" thus serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it encourages a person who has, in a moment of weakness, committed a sin, not to despair because God, being his Master, has the power to forgive. On the other hand, it serves as a warning against taking undue advantage of God's mercy. For if as God, the Master could, and no doubt

would, forgive, He would also hate to see His servants degraded by sin. God, the Master, inspires man both with hope and with fear, and this is essential for man's spiritual progress and development.

The four attributes of God, i.e. (1) رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds); (2) الرحمن (Gracious); (3) الرحيم (Merciful) and (4) مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) mentioned in verses 2-4 are fundamental. The other attributes only explain and serve as a sort of commentary upon these four attributes, which are like four pillars on which the Throne of the Almighty rests.

The order in which these four attributes have been mentioned here throws light on how God manifests His attributes to men. It is obvious that the first divine attribute to manifest itself to man is that of رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) which means that, together with the creation of man, God creates the necessary environment for his spiritual progress and development. Next, the attribute of الرحمن (Gracious) comes into operation, and through this, God, so to speak, hands over to man the means and material required for his moral and spiritual advancement. And when man has made proper use of the means thus granted to him, the attribute of الرحيم (Merciful) comes in to reward his works. Last of all, the attribute of مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) produces the final and collective result of man's labour; and the process finds consummation

in him being granted spiritual dominion over the world, as is granted to the chosen ones of God. This is what may be called the descent of God towards man.

On the other hand, when man begins to ascend towards God, the process is reversed. In this process, man, first of all, becomes the manifestation of the attribute of مالك (Master); he begins to manifest in himself the attribute of عدل or justice, tempering it with mercy and forgiveness. Having developed in his person the attribute of مالك, man reaches the second stage of spiritual progress where he becomes the manifestation of the attribute of الرحيم i.e. he begins to reward the actions of men liberally and generously. This is the stage which is termed احسان or beneficence. The next stage relates to the attribute of الرحمن. Here the sphere of man's beneficence becomes widespread; his goodness extends to believers and un-believers alike—he begins to treat them just as a mother treats her children, prompted only by a natural instinct and without hope of any return. This stage has been termed ايتاء ذى القربى i.e. doing good to others as one would do to one's near relatives. Then comes the attribute of رب العالمين which marks the highest stage of man's spiritual development, when he becomes a manifestation of "Lord of all the worlds". At this stage man makes himself responsible for the welfare and guidance of the whole world. He is not satisfied if he or only those who immediately surround him are guided or otherwise provided for,

5. <sup>a</sup>Thee alone do we worship  
and <sup>b</sup>Thee alone do we implore  
for help.<sup>5</sup>

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝

<sup>a</sup>11:3; 12:41; 16:37; 17:24; 41:38. <sup>b</sup>2:46, 154; 21:113.

but desires the good of the whole world, and begins to use his God-given powers for the achievement of this great end. This is the philosophy of هبوط and صعود i.e. the process of Descent and Ascent which has been so beautifully described in these three short verses.

### 5. Important Words:

نَعْبُدُ (we worship) is derived from عَبدَ. We say عَبدَ الله meaning: he believed in the Oneness of God and served and obeyed Him with humility and submissiveness. عِبَادَةٌ which is the noun-infinitive from عَبدَ signifies humility, submissiveness, obedience and service; the idea is not of simple humility but of complete humility. It also implies belief in God's Oneness and declaration of it (Aqrab). عِبَادِيَّة has the same meaning, but عِبَادَةٌ is more intensive and more extensive in its significance (Mufradāt). Another meaning of the word is to accept the impress of a thing. In Mufradāt we have طريق معبد اى مذلل i.e. a way becomes a way when, on account of constant travelling, it becomes susceptible to the travellers' footprints. With reference to God the meaning would be "receiving the impress of His attributes". عَبد means: a man, whether free or slave; a male slave or a bondman (Aqrab); a servant or worshipper of God. عَبد الطاغوت means, one who serves or worships the devil (Lane).

### Commentary:

True worship demands perfect humility and complete submissiveness, and this is not possible unless there is born in the heart of man a state agreeable to it. So a person can worship God in the real sense of the word only when acts of worship are performed with complete humility of heart.

It should, however, be noted that in Islam عِبَادَةٌ does not merely mean the performance of certain known acts of worship, e.g. Prayer, Fasting, etc. It has a much wider significance. In fact, the Holy Prophet of Islam is reported to have said that any act performed in obedience to God's commands and to seek His pleasure is an act of 'Ibādah. Says the Holy Prophet: "If you give a morsel of food to your wife (believing that you are thereby obeying a behest of God), you will find the reward thereof with God" (Bukhārī).

In the verse the word نَعْبُدُ has been placed before the word نَسْتَعِينُ to signify that after man has become aware of God, his first impulse is to worship Him. The idea of invoking God's help comes after the impulse to worship. Man wishes to worship God but he finds that for doing so he needs God's help. That is why the word نَسْتَعِينُ is placed after the word نَعْبُدُ. Man should first make up his mind to worship

God, then seek His help for carrying out this resolve.

The word اياك (Thee alone) has been placed before the words نعوذ and نستعين to point to the fact that not only is God alone deserving of worship but that He alone can give the help which man needs to discharge this duty truly and effectively. As long as man is not granted the power and means necessary for his guidance, it is not possible for him to become God's عبد or servant in the real sense of the word. No man-made law can make man a good and true servant of the Lord; it is only God's help that can bring about this change in him.

The use of the plural number in عبد and نستعين directs our attention to two very important points:

(1) That man is not alone in this world but is part and parcel of the society that surrounds him. He should, therefore, seek not to go alone but to carry others also with him on the path of God.

(2) That as long as a person does not reform his environment, his own reform cannot make him immune from danger; for a house surrounded by others on fire cannot enjoy security for long. Thus the use of the plural number points to a principle which is of vital importance for the moral, cultural and spiritual uplift of Muslims as well as for their success in missionary and other activities. The principle is a special feature of Islam and remains as important today as it ever was.

The verse also contains a hint about the eternal controversy whether man

is free or predestined to follow a given course of action. Men of learning in all ages have disagreed upon this point, and no solution has yet been found. Some are of the opinion that man is the master of his will and is free to do what he likes, while others believe that freedom of action is an illusion and man only acts in a manner predestined for him. The verse offers an easy solution of this difficult problem.

The words اياك نعوذ (Thee alone do we worship) which have been put by God in the mouth of man draw our attention to the fact that man is not predestined but free to choose and carry out a course of action as he likes. On the other hand, the words اياك نستعين (Thee alone do we implore for help) remind us of the fact that, though free, we may yet suffer from constraints and compulsions of various kinds. The prayer, *Thee alone do we implore for help*, implies that God keeps a watch over our actions and takes steps to remove the constraints which keep us from the path He calls upon us to tread.

The Christian doctrine that man has inherited sin from Adam and therefore cannot get rid of it without atonement is tantamount to the belief that man is not free but is bound to adopt a course predestined for him. Similarly, the Hindu doctrine of transmigration of souls is also a form of predestination. That man's state in the present life is the result of his actions in a previous life, only means that man is bound to follow the course to which he is prenatally

6. Guide us in <sup>a</sup>the right path,<sup>6</sup>

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝

<sup>a</sup>19:37; 36:62; 42:53, 54.

destined. Of modern thinkers, Freud, the famous Austrian psychologist, has also lent powerful support to this view. He has tried to show that the adult has his actions determined by the environment and experiences through which he passes in early childhood. Unable to shed the influence of his early days, the adult is not free. True, early environment exerts an influence on the later life. The Holy Prophet of Islam, fourteen hundred years ago, drew attention to the fact that one's childhood environment exerts a distinct influence on adulthood. Says he: "A child is born in the likeness of Islam; it is his parents that make him a Christian, a Jew or a Fire-worshipper" (Bukhārī). In spite of this, Islam repudiates the idea that man is not free. It is commonly seen that later in one's life, one often outgrows the atmosphere and ideas of his childhood and instead adopts a course of life quite different from the life he would have lived if he had not outgrown those ideas.

There is yet another point to be cleared about this verse. In the first four verses of this chapter, God is spoken of in the third person, but in this verse He is suddenly addressed in the second person. This abrupt change from the third to the second person may appear to be an example of bad grammar. Nothing of the kind. A thoughtful contemplation of the divine attributes in the first four

verses brings to the mind of the worshipper such an attractive picture of his Creator that he feels irresistibly drawn towards Him, and this, coupled with the realization of His presence, makes him address his Lord and invoke His assistance in a supplicatory tone. The Quran is not a book of philosophy but has been sent to bring about a change in man and to open up to him avenues of spiritual progress. Therefore, its style is made to fit in with the nature of man and with his innermost feelings. The contemplation of the four attributes creates in man such an irresistible longing for his Creator and such an intense desire to offer his whole-hearted devotion to Him that, in order to satisfy this longing of the soul, the third person used in the first four verses has been changed to the second in the fifth verse. It is to this point that the Holy Prophet has beautifully alluded in a ḥadīth. Says he: "Allah has divided the chapter *Aṣ-Ṣalāt* equally between man and Himself, the first half belongs to Allah, the second to His servant. When, therefore, a man offers this prayer to God from the fullness of his heart and asks for something, the same is given to him" (Muslim).

### 6. Important Words:

هداه (guide) is derived from هدى means: he guided him. هداة الطريق or هداة الى الطريق means, he showed him the right path and made it known to him. هدى فلانا means: he led the way for

him. The word هدى is also sometimes used intransitively. They say هدى الرجل i.e. the man became rightly guided. The infinitive form الهدى is generally used in three different senses:

- (1) to show the right path,
- (2) to lead to the right path,
- (3) to make one follow the right path (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Baqā).

In the Quran, the word has been used in all these different senses. Thus, in the Quran we read:

(1) وهديته النجدين i.e. We showed him the two highways of good and evil. (90:11).

(2) والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا i.e. Those who strive in Our cause, We will assuredly lead them to Our ways. (29:70).

(3) الحمد لله الذى هدانا لهذا i.e. All praise belongs to Allah Who has guided us to this (His Paradise), which means: He made us follow the right path till we reached Heaven (7:44).

In another place, the Quran says:

والذين اهتدوا زادهم هدى meaning: those who accept His guidance, God increases them in guidance and leads them on to higher and higher stages of it, till they reach their destination (47:18).

صراط (path) is also written with س. It means a path which is even and can be trodden without difficulty (Mufradāt).

مستقيم (right) is derived from قام i.e. he stood up erect, or he stood still. استقام means: it became straight and even; it had the right direction. مستقيم therefore means: straight, undeviating and without any crookedness; right; rightly directed (Mufradāt & Lane).

### Commentary:

The prayer taught in this short verse is so perfect and so comprehensive that it has no parallel in any other religion. In the first place, the verse teaches that paths are of two kinds: (1) even and straight, and (2) uneven and crooked, and the attention of a true believer is drawn to the fact that he should always be on the look out to take the straight path and reject the crooked one.

Again, sometimes a man is shown the right path but is not led up to it, or, if he is led up to it, he fails to stick to it and follow it to the end. The prayer embodied in this verse requires us not to be satisfied with being shown a path, or even with being led up to it, but ever to go on following it till we reach the destination.

Another aspect of this wonderful prayer is that it is not confined to things spiritual or to things of this world only, but covers the entire field of human requirements, both spiritual and temporal. This makes the prayer truly comprehensive. A Christian prays only for his "daily bread," but a Muslim is enjoined to make his prayer cover the entire field of his requirements, material or spiritual. Moreover, as hinted above, this prayer is not confined to man's present requirements but extends to his future requirements also. It is a wonderful prayer, which even a non-Muslim may use without contravening any of his religious views. In fact, many non-Muslims have used this prayer and benefited from its marvellous efficacy.

7. The path of <sup>a</sup>those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not <sup>b</sup>incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not <sup>c</sup>gone astray.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>a</sup>4:70; 5:21; 19:59. <sup>b</sup>2:62, 91; 3:113; 5:61, 79. <sup>c</sup>3:91; 5:78; 18:105.

It has been objected that Muslims offer this prayer in their daily Prayers and their constant prayer for the right path shows that they have not yet found it. This objection springs from sheer ignorance. As already explained, this verse teaches a Muslim to pray not only that God may show him the right path, not merely that He may lead him to it, but that He may enable him to go on praying till he reaches the goal. In fact, man needs God's help at every step and at every moment, and it is imperative that he should ever be offering to God the supplication embodied in the verse. Constant praying, therefore, is not only unobjectionable, it is absolutely necessary. To say that the repetition of this comprehensive prayer is futile is simply absurd. As long as we have unfulfilled requirements, unsatisfied needs and unattained goals, we stand in need of this prayer; and what prayer can be more comprehensive and pithier than this?

### 7. Important Words:

انعمت (Thou hast bestowed blessings) is derived from نعم which means, he became well off. نعم عيشه means: his life became happy and full of comfort and ease. انعم على فلانا

فلان means: he made his life comfortable; he bestowed favour on him. نعمة means: favour, blessing; anything which affords happiness (Aqrab). The word انعم is used with reference to rational beings only. For instance, we would say انعم على عبده i.e. he bestowed a favour on his slave or servant, and not انعم على فرسه i.e. he bestowed a favour on his horse (Mufradāt).

المغضوب (those who have incurred displeasure) is derived from غضب which means: he was angry, he showed anger. غضب عليه means: he was angry with him, he was wrathful against him, his anger and wrath being combined with the intention of punishing or retaliating (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

الضالين (those gone astray) is derived from ضل which means: he went astray, he lost his way, he deviated from the right path. ضل سعيه means: his effort was lost, being unsuccessful. ضل الرجل means: the man perished and his body became converted into dust (Aqrab). The word ضلالة is also used to indicate the state of being engrossed or lost in some effort or pursuit. Says the Quran:

الذين ضل سعيهم في الحياة الدنيا

i.e. those whose labour is all lost in



search after things pertaining to the life of this world (18:105).

Again: *ووجدك ضالاً فهدى* i.e. and He (God) found thee engrossed in search (after Him), so He showed thee the way (93:8).

### Commentary:

In the last verse, God taught us to pray for guidance to the right path. In the present verse the idea has been further advanced by adding the words, *the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*. This has been done with a twofold purpose:

1. That a true believer should not be satisfied with only being guided to the right path or with performing certain acts of righteousness. He should set his goal higher, and try to attain to a position in which God begins to bestow His special favours on His servants. He should not merely pass the test but excel in it.

2. That a true believer should look up to the historical examples of divine favours and receive encouragement from them. But he is not to stop at that particular point. He should try to join the favoured company and become one of them. And as the topmost in a class is still one of the class, the goal set before a believer is very high indeed.

For a description of *الذين انعمت عليهم* i.e. the favoured ones, we read elsewhere in the Quran: *فاولئك مع الذين انعم الله عليهم من النبيين والصديقين والشهداء والصالحين* i.e. those who believe in God and follow the Prophet are among the favoured ones—the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous (4:70).

Here the favoured ones have been divided into four classes, the topmost being the Prophets and the lowermost the righteous. Thus a Muslim has been enjoined to pray to God for the bestowal of such spiritual favours upon him as may enable him to belong to one of these favoured classes. Even the highest favours, pertaining to prophethood are not denied to Muslims. This indeed is a lofty goal!

The point needs further elaboration. The verse, as hinted above, beautifully points out that a Muslim should not only desire mere virtue but should aim at inclusion in the class of men who have won the special favours of God. One who loves God does not remain content with an inferior state. Love of the Supreme Being engenders in the heart of man such a burning aspiration that he is not satisfied with an ordinary stage of progress. Indeed, one who understands God cannot look upon any stage of progress as final. Not only is the desire for unending progress found in the heart of the true believer, but God Himself wishes man not to remain content with a low stage, but to pray for ever-increasing righteousness; the righteousness of those who have won special prizes.

As already pointed out, the word *انعام* (favour) is not confined to any particular gift but includes everything which is given to a person as a token of pleasure, be it worldly or spiritual.

Again, though every favour is a divine blessing, it cannot be denied that there are certain favours which

particularly deserve to be so called, for they rank among the topmost favours. The Quran says, *And remember when Moses said to his people, O my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He gave not to any other among the peoples* (5:21). This verse pointedly refers to the things which can be held to be special favours for man; and the Israelites are told that they have been given a goodly portion of all these favours.

Human excellences are of three kinds: (1) worldly and personal, (2) spiritual and personal, and (3) worldly or spiritual excellences in relation to others, i.e. excellences that are of a relative nature and pertain to the superiority of an individual or a people relative to others. A man naturally likes to attain this last kind of excellence also, which confers upon him a superiority over his rivals and compatriots. In the verse quoted above (i.e. 5:21) Moses ascribes all these three kinds of favours to the Israelites:

(1) They received worldly favours, so much so that they remained rulers of a land for a long time. All worldly excellences require kingship or government administration for their right growth and development, and a people who become rulers get this important means of development, irrespective of whether they benefit by it or not. The very fact that kingship is granted to a people means that all avenues of worldly progress are thrown open and made secure for them.

(2) They also received high spiritual favours. Just as kingship is a means of attaining worldly greatness and constitutes its culminating point, prophethood is the means of attaining spiritual greatness and constitutes the culminating point of spiritual progress. This is why Moses tells his people that prophethood, the greatest spiritual favour, has also been conferred upon them. Indeed they were granted this favour through a long series of Prophets.

(3) The third class of favours being relative, Moses most fittingly tells his people that God *gave you what He had not given to any other among the peoples*. In the above expression, though the idea is that of Moses, the words are Quranic and, as usual, the Quran has combined brevity of words with vastness of meaning in a manner which cannot fail to impress a thoughtful person.

The words: *the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*, coming after the words: *Guide us in the right path*, greatly enhance the significance of the former. The words indicate that the objective of a Muslim is not to merely pray that God show him the right way. They direct him to pray for loftier objects and to implore God that He may not only show him the ways of guidance but that He may lead him to those special paths of spiritual knowledge which had been revealed to the favoured ones before him. By raising such high aspirations in the minds of the believers, God has indeed conferred a

great boon on Muslims.

Although in the presence of this clear and plain teaching it is not necessary to give any further evidence to show that the doors to every kind of progress have been thrown open to the believers, yet, as the latter-day Muslims have generally given way to despair, it is necessary to turn to the Quran to see what it means by prayer for the grant of favours, and whether it holds out any promise of the acceptance of this prayer. As partly quoted above, we read in 4:67-70: *And if they had done what they are exhorted to do, it would surely have been better for them, and conducive to greater strength, and then We would have surely given them a great reward from Ourselves, and We would have surely guided them in the right path. And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger (of His), shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, namely, the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, and excellent companions are these.*

The above-quoted verse clearly speaks of the favours that are in store for the true Muslims and uses the very words which occur in the verse under comment, viz. *the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*. As already noted, the recipients of blessings have been explained to mean *the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous*. This shows that the divine gifts which Muslims are asked to pray for embody the highest stages of spiritual progress, and the Quran informs us that all these stages are

attainable, and indeed will be attained, by Muslims.

The objection is sometimes raised that while prophethood is a موهبة i.e. a free gift and not a كسب i.e. something to be earned, it is meaningless to offer any prayer for its attainment. The answer to this objection is that a Muslim does not pray particularly for the gift of prophethood. He only prays in a general way and implores God to bestow the highest spiritual favours on Muslims, and it rests with God to confer His favours on whomsoever He pleases. The Quran says, *Allah knows best where to place His message* (6:125), i.e. He alone knows whom to make His Messenger. This is why God has taught this prayer in the plural number, saying *Guide us*, and not "Guide me"—to point out that prayer for such spiritual blessings should be general and not particular. Moreover, though it is true that prophethood is a free gift, yet it is not wholly so, for there is undoubtedly some element of "earning" in it, otherwise why was this gift conferred on Muḥammad (on whom be peace) and not on Abū Jahl?

Another objection in this connection is that when the Holy Prophet has been declared to be خاتم النبيين (Seal of Prophets), there is no possibility of any Prophet appearing after him. This objection has also been clearly answered in the verses quoted above (4:67-70); for there the words used are *whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger (of His)* which definitely means that the spiritual boons, including that of prophethood, promised to Muslims will be given

only to such as will obey God and His Messenger—the Holy Prophet; and it is evident that the work of one who is subordinate to the Prophet cannot be considered as separate from the work of the Prophet, nor can such a one bring a new Law. Hence the appearance of a Prophet from among the followers of the Holy Prophet is not inconsistent with the latter's being the Seal of Prophets. On the contrary, such a Prophet will only complete the significance of خاتم النبيين. But of this we will speak later at its proper place. In short, the verse clearly tells us that the door of the highest spiritual blessings—even that of prophethood—is open to Muslims.

It should, however, be noted that "a favour" or "a blessing" spoken of in the verse is not to be understood in the spiritual sense only. It covers the entire field of human activity, and in its wider significance, the prayer includes the seeking of what may be called earthly eminence. Knowledge, honour, power, wealth are all among the favours of God and a true believer may pray for the attainment of these along with the spiritual blessings.

The latter portion of the verse contains a dreadful warning. Man receives favours from God and then begins to abuse them. Or he loses the right path, encounters a fall, and becomes rejected by God. It is to guard against this danger that the latter portion of the verse contains a warning for mankind in general and for Muslims in particular. God enjoins us to pray that after becoming His favoured ones, we should not incur His displeasure nor stray from

the right path, so that our progress, be it spiritual or temporal, may be continuous with no falling back.

The words المَغضُوبُ عَلَيْهِمُ and الضَّالِّينَ have been used to denote two kinds of dangers. One is that one should outwardly stick to the right path but lose the inner spirit, retaining the shell without the kernel. The other is that one should lose the path itself and wander away into the wilderness. It is to these two kinds of dangers that the words المَغضُوبُ عَلَيْهِمُ and الضَّالِّينَ refer. The Holy Prophet said:

إن المَغضُوبَ عَلَيْهِمُ اليهود والضَّالِّينَ هم النصارى i.e. by المَغضُوبُ عَلَيْهِمُ are meant Jews, and by الضَّالِّينَ Christians (Tirmidhī & Musnad). These words of the Prophet are full of meaning. Not only do they describe the nature of the two dangers but also warn Muslims that if they are not watchful, they may fall a prey to them. They may either lose the spirit of faith just as the Jews did, who stuck to the letter of the Law but lost its spirit; or they may lose the path itself just as the Christians did, who strayed from the true teachings of Jesus and began to tread a different path altogether. The Quran speaks of the wrath of God falling on the Jews time after time (2:62; 2:91; 3:113; 5:61). It also refers to the drifting away of the Christians from the real teaching of Jesus (5:78).

The words المَغضُوبُ عَلَيْهِمُ and الضَّالِّينَ also refer to another set of dangers. As is well known, the Holy Prophet had prophesied the second coming of Jesus Christ which meant the coming of a Reformer and a Messiah among Muslims in the spirit and power of Jesus. By using the words المَغضُوبُ عَلَيْهِمُ,

which the Holy Prophet said refer-red to the Jews, the Quran warns Muslims against meeting the fate of the Jews by rejecting the Promised Messiah when he appears among them. This prophecy of the second advent of Jesus has been fulfilled in the person of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qadian, the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.

The other danger is alluded to in الضالين which, according to the Holy Prophet, refers to Christians. The verse foretells a time when Christian nations would dominate the world, and it warns Muslims to be on their guard against the false beliefs and evil culture of these nations. A most dreadful warning, but most deplorably neglected!

This, the last verse of *Al-Fātiḥah*, embodies yet another great prophecy. As we have seen, this chapter was revealed early in Mecca when the Holy Prophet was surrounded by idolaters and Islam had not yet come in contact with either Jews or Christians. Yet the prayer in this verse refers to the danger of Jews and Christians and not to the danger of idolatry. This unexpected omission in the case of idol-worshippers and this unexpected reference to the People of the Book is not without significance. Idol-worship was to be swept out of Arabia and was no longer to be a danger to Islam, but dangers far more formidable were to confront it in the Latter Days—the internal danger of Muslims becoming like Jews, and the external danger of their becoming like Christians. The prophecy in this verse therefore has a threefold

significance: (1) it refers to the early extinction of idolatry from Arabia; (2) it speaks of the danger of Muslims drifting into a state like that of Jews, and (3) it alludes to the universal ascendance of Christian nations in the Latter Days, and warns Muslims against adopting their faith and imbibing their culture. All these prophecies have been literally fulfilled.

The Holy Prophet says that when a Muslim comes to the end of the prayer contained in *Al-Fātiḥah*, he should say آمين (Amen), i.e. 'Accept our prayer, o Lord!' It is therefore customary with Muslims to say 'Amen' after reciting *Al-Fātiḥah*.

### **A General Note on the Chapter *Al-Fātiḥah***

*Al-Fātiḥah*, the opening *Sūrah* of the Quran, reveals a beautiful order in the arrangement of its words and sentences. It is divided, as the Holy Prophet has said, into two halves. The first half pertains to God, the second to man, and the different parts of each portion correspond to one another in a most remarkable manner. Corresponding to the name الله (Allah), which stands for the Being possessing all noble attributes, in the first half, we have the words, *Thee alone do we worship*. In the second half, as soon as the devotee thinks of God as being free from all defects and possessing all perfect attributes, the cry of *Thee alone do we worship* spontaneously rises from the depths of his heart.

Again, corresponding to the attribute رب العالمين (Lord of all the worlds) in the first part, we have the

words *Thee alone do we implore for help* in the second part. When a Muslim knows God to be the Lord, i.e. the Creator and Sustainer of the worlds and the Source of all development, he at once takes shelter in Him, saying: *Thee alone do we implore for help*.

Again, corresponding to the attribute الرحمن (the Gracious, i.e. the Giver of innumerable blessings, and the Liberal Provider of our needs) in the first part, we have the words *Guide us in the right path* in the second; for the greatest of the blessings provided for man is guidance which God provides for him by sending revelation through His Messengers.

Again, corresponding to the attribute الرحيم (the Merciful, i.e. the Giver of the best rewards for man's works) in the first part, we have the words *The path of those on whom Thou had bestowed Thy blessings* in the second, for it is *Ar-Raḥīm* Who bestows merited blessings on His favoured servants.

Yet again, corresponding to مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) in the first half, we have the concluding part of the last verse in the second, viz. *those who have not incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not gone astray*. When man thinks of giving an account of his deeds, he dreads failure; so, pondering over the attribute of *Master of the Day of Judgement*, he begins to pray to God to be saved from His displeasure and from straying from the right path.

Another special feature of the

prayer contained in this chapter is that it appeals to the inner instincts of man in a perfectly natural manner. There are two fundamental motives in human nature which prompt submission, viz. love and fear. Some people are touched by love, while others are moved by fear. The motive of love is certainly nobler but there may be, indeed there are, men to whom love makes no appeal. They will only submit through fear. In *Al-Fātiḥah* an appeal has been made to both of these human motives.

First come those attributes of God which inspire love, i.e. الرب (the Creator and Sustainer of the world), الرحمن (the Gracious) and الرحيم (the Merciful). Then in their wake, as it were, comes the attribute of مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) which reminds man that if he does not mend his ways and does not respond to love, he should prepare to give an account of his deeds before God. Thus the motive of fear is brought into play side by side with that of love. But as God's mercy far excels His anger, even the fourth attribute, i.e. that of مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement), which is the only fundamental attribute designed to evoke fear, has not been left without a reference to mercy. In fact, here too God's mercy transcends His anger, for we are told that we are not appearing before a Judge but before a Master Who has the power to forgive and Who will punish only where punishment is absolutely necessary.

Similarly, at the end of the prayer, the motives of hope and fear have

been brought into play. First God appeals through the motive of love by putting into the mouth of the supplicant the words: *Guide us in the right path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings*; and then He follows it up with the words: *Those who have not incurred Thy displeasure and those who have not gone astray*. Thus both the motives of hope and fear have been brought into action. But here too the first appeal is to the motive of love.

In short, *Al-Fātiḥah*, the Opening Chapter of the Quran, is a wonderful storehouse of spiritual knowledge. It is a short chapter of seven brief verses, but it is a mine of knowledge and wisdom. Aptly called the "Mother of the Book," it is the very essence of the Quran.

Beginning with the name of Allah, the Fountainhead of all blessings, the chapter goes on to narrate the four fundamental attributes of God, i.e. (1) the Creator and Sustainer of the world; (2) the Gracious, Who provides for all the requirements of man even before he is born and without any effort on his part for them; (3) the Merciful, Who determines the best possible results of man's labour, and Who rewards him most liberally; and (4) Master of the Day of Judgement, before Whom all will have to stand to give an account of their actions, Who will punish the wicked but will not treat His creatures as a mere Judge but as a Master, tempering justice with mercy

and Who is eager to forgive whenever forgiveness is calculated to bring about good results. This is the portrait of the God of Islam given in the very beginning of the Quran—a God Whose power and dominion know no bounds and Whose mercy and beneficence have no limitations.

Then comes the declaration by man that, his God being the possessor of such lofty attributes, he is ready, nay eager, to worship Him and throw himself at His feet in complete submission; however, God knows that man is weak and liable to err, so He mercifully exhorts His servant to seek His help at every step in his onward march and for every need that may confront him.

Finally comes a prayer—comprehensive and far-reaching—a prayer in which man supplicates his Maker to lead him to the right path in all matters, spiritual or temporal, whether relating to his present or future needs. He prays to God that he may not only withstand all trials but, like the chosen ones of God, do so with credit and become the recipient of His most bounteous favours; that he may forever go on treading the right path, pressing on nearer and yet nearer to his Lord and Master without stumbling on the way, as did many of those who have gone before. This is the theme of the Opening Chapter of the Quran which is constantly repeated, in one form or another, in the main body of the Book which we are now approaching.

## CHAPTER 2

### AL-BAQARAH

(Revealed after Hijrah)

#### General Remarks

This, the longest chapter of the Quran, is known as *Al-Baqarah*. The name was used by the Holy Prophet himself and is probably revealed. The *Sūrah* was given this name probably because the word *Baqarah* (Cow) symbolizes an important incident (related in this *Sūrah*) in the life of the Jewish nation and points to the fact that nations decay and fall not only on account of *شرك جلي* (manifest *shirk*) but also on account of *شرك خفي* (hidden *shirk*) which being likely to be overlooked is, in a sense, more dangerous than the former and spells the spiritual ruin of a people that do not properly guard themselves against it. The *Sūrah* has another name also, i.e. *الزهراء* and both this *Sūrah* and the one that follows, viz. the *Āl-e-‘Imrān* are jointly known as *الزهروان* i.e. the two bright ones (Muslim). The Holy Prophet is reported to have once said: "Everything has its peak, and the peak of the Quran is *Al-Baqarah*; and in this *Sūrah* there is a verse which is the most eminent among the verses of the Quran and that is *Āyatul-Kursī*" (Tirmidhī). Again, "Whosoever shall recite ten verses of this chapter—the first four verses, the *Āyatul-Kursī*, along with the two verses which come after it, and the last three verses—Satan will not enter his house." This only means that these verses embody the essence of Islamic teaching, and that Satan cannot come near the man who faithfully acts on these teachings.

#### Date of Revelation

*Al-Baqarah* was revealed at Medina. It began to be revealed in the first year of the Hijrah and was completed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet.

#### Place of the Surah in the Quran

It is sometimes asked why this chapter, which, as stated above, began to be revealed after the Hijrah and was completed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet, was placed at the head of the Quran being second only to *Al-Fātiḥah*. The question forms part of the general question relating to the arrangement of the Quran, and will be found discussed in the General Introduction to this Commentary. Here it should suffice to say that *Al-Baqarah* has been placed next to *Al-Fātiḥah*, not because it is the longest, but because it deals with questions which at once confront a reader who turns from *Al-Fātiḥah* to a study of the main Book.

The literary merit of this *Sūrah* is unparalleled. It is on record that Labīd bin Rabi‘ah, one of the seven outstanding Arab poets of the pre-Islamic days, who later embraced Islam, was once asked by ‘Umar, the Second



*Khalīfah*, to recite from his recent poetry. Upon this, Labīd began to recite *Al-Baqarah*, and when asked about it, he only said, "How can I think of composing anything after God has taught me *Al-Baqarah* and *Āl-e-‘Imrān*" (Ghābbah).

## **Subject Matter**

The subject matter of this long chapter is epitomized in its 130th verse. This verse contains a prayer of the Prophet Abraham in which he implores God to raise a Prophet from among the Meccans who should (1) recite to them the signs of God; (2) give the world a perfect Book containing perfect laws; (3) explain the wisdom underlying them; and (4) lay down principles which should lead to a spiritual transformation in the people and make them a great and powerful nation. The four ends which Abraham prayed for are dealt with at length in this chapter in the same order in which he prayed for them. The "signs" are discussed in the beginning in vv. 1-168; then the "Book and Wisdom" in vv. 169-243 and lastly the "Means of National Progress" in vv. 244-287.

"The recitation of the signs" refers to the arguments for the truth of the Holy Prophet's message. We are told, for instance, that he appeared in the fulness of time in fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. The Holy Prophet was no innovator. Messengers of God had appeared before, and Islam was only the culmination of the religious history of man. Accounts of the Prophets of Israel and the working of the law of nature have been cited in support of the Holy Prophet's claim. Unbelievers are warned that if they reject the Signs that have appeared in support of the Holy Prophet, it will lead to their own extinction.

"The teaching of the Book and Wisdom" refers to the laws of Sharī'ah laid down in the chapter and to the wisdom or philosophy which underlies them. After a description of fundamentals like belief in God, the Last Day, the divine revelations and the Prophets of God, we have ordinances about Prayer, Fasting and Pilgrimage, and then laws relating to marriage, divorce, the care of orphans and widows, the law of inheritance, etc. along with the wisdom underlying these laws and ordinances.

Last of all, in elucidation of the subject of spiritual change spoken of in Abraham's prayer, the principles that lead to national awakening are briefly but effectively dealt with, and the lesson is brought home that no people could hope to live who are not always prepared to die for their ideals. The giving and taking of interest is denounced, as this practice not only kills the spirit of sacrifice and mutual cooperation but also leads to war and helps to prolong it.

The *Sūrah* ends with a moving prayer in which God's help is invoked by believers for the discharge of their great responsibilities.

### **Connection with *Al-Fātiḥah***

*Al-Fātiḥah*, though connected with all the other *Sūrah*s, is specially connected with *Al-Baqarah*. The latter is the fulfilment of the prayer, *Guide us in the right path*, contained in the opening chapter of the Quran. Indeed *Al-Baqarah*, with its discourses upon the Signs, the Book, the Wisdom and the Means of Purification, constitutes an appropriate and comprehensive reply to that great prayer.



## (AL-BAQARAH)

1. <sup>a</sup>In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.<sup>8</sup>

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

2. <sup>b</sup>Alif Lām Mīm.<sup>8A</sup>

آلَم

آلَم ②

<sup>a</sup>1:1. <sup>b</sup>3:2; 7:2; 13:2; 29:2; 30:2; 31:2; 32:2.

**8. Commentary:**

See note under 1:1.

**8A. Commentary:**

Abbreviations like آلَم (Alif Lām Mīm) are known as المقطعات (*Al-Muqatta'āt*), i.e. letters used and pronounced separately. They occur in the beginning of not less than 28 *Sūrahs*, and are made up of one or more, to a maximum of five, letters of the Arabic alphabet. The letters out of which these abbreviations are constituted are thirteen in number: *Alif, Lām, Mīm, Sād, Rā, Kāf, Hā, Yā, 'Ain, Tā, Sīn, Hā, Nūn* and *Qāf*. Of these *Sād, Qāf* and *Nūn* occur alone in the beginning of one *Sūrah* only; the rest occur in combinations of two or more in the beginning of certain *Sūrahs*.

Of the meanings ascribed to *Muqatta'āt* two seem to be more authentic: 1. that each letter has a definite numerical value. Thus ا has the value of 1, ب of 2, ج of 3, د of 4, ه of 5, and so on (Aqrab). This system was known to the early Arabs and is mentioned in some well-known books of tradition (e.g. Jarīr, 70 & 71). In numerical terms the letters آلَم (Alif Lām Mīm) could signify the length of time which the full manifestation of the inner significance of the *Sūrah* was meant to take.

The letters آلَم have the numerical value of 71 (ا being 1, ل 30 and م 40). Thus the placing of Alif Lām Mīm in the beginning of the *Sūrah* would mean that the subject matter of *Al-Baqarah*, i.e. the special consolidation of early Islam, would take 71 years to unfold itself completely. It is well known that this consolidation went on until the year 71 *Nabawī* (after claim of Prophethood), the year of the coming to power of Yazīd, son of Mu'awiyah, when the history of Islam took a different turn.

2. The second and much more important significance of the *Muqatta'āt* is that they are abbreviations for specific attributes of God and a *Sūrah* before which the *Muqatta'āt* are placed is, in its subject matter, connected with the divine attributes for which the *Muqatta'āt* stand. The Arabs used such abbreviations. Says an Arab poet:

بالخير خيرات وإن شرفاً ولا أريد الشر إلا أن تأ

"I will certainly return good for good; but if you are bent on mischief, so will I. I do not contemplate mischief except that you yourself should desire it" (Jarīr). Here نأ and تأ stand for فشر and تشاء respectively. Similarly, the letters آلَم stand for أنا الله i.e. "I am Allah, the All-

3. This is a perfect Book; <sup>a</sup>there is no doubt in <sup>b</sup>it; *it is a* <sup>عَلَىٰ</sup> <sup>لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى</sup> <sup>لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ</sup> guidance for the righteous,<sup>9</sup>

<sup>a</sup>2:24; 10:38; 32:3; 41:43. <sup>b</sup>2:186; 3:139; 31:4.

Knowing"—a meaning which has the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, cousin of the Holy Prophet (Jarīr). Thus Alif Lām Mīm placed in the beginning of *Al-Baqarah* indicate that the central theme of this chapter is divine knowledge. God proclaims, as it were, that Muslims, weak in the beginning, will soon become strong and attain to knowledge, wisdom and power.

The system of using *Muqatta‘āt* was in vogue among the Arabs, who used them in their poems and conversations. In the modern West also the use of abbreviations has become very widespread. Nearly every dictionary provides a list of them along with their meanings (For fuller discussion of the *Muqatta‘āt* see *Tafsīr-e-Kabīr* by Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ II, Qadian).

### 9. Important Words:

ذَالِك (this) is derived from ذَا meaning "this". The word is primarily used in the sense of "that," but it is also sometimes used in the sense of "this" (Aqrab). Here it is used to denote that the Book, as it were, is remote from the reader in eminence and loftiness of merit (Fath).

ال (perfect), like the definite article "the" in the English language, is used to denote a definite object known to the hearer or reader. In this sense the words ذَالِك الْكِتَابُ would mean, this is the Book, or this is that Book. The

article ال is also used to denote a species in its totality or the properties of an individual in their totality. It is also used to denote the combination of all attributes in one individual, as one says زَيْدُ الرَّجُلِ (*Zaidu nir-rajulu*), i.e. Zaid is a perfect specimen of humanity. In this sense the words ذَالِك الْكِتَابُ would mean, this is a Perfect Book, or this Book alone is Perfect.

رَيْب (doubt) is derived from رَاى. They say رَاىهِ meaning, he caused him uneasiness of mind, or he put him in doubt, etc. رَيْب means: (1) disquietude or uneasiness of mind; (2) doubt; (3) affliction or calamity and (4) evil opinion, false charge or calumny (Aqrab). The word has been used in the Quran at different places; but in the sense of "doubt" it is always used in a bad sense. The Quran addresses disbelievers, saying: *If you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant* (2:24). Here رَيْب means "doubt" about a truth. The Holy Prophet says: "Give up that which creates رَيْب (doubt) in your mind in favour of that which does not create any doubt" (Musnad). Here again رَيْب is used in a bad sense. So the word رَيْب when used in the sense of "doubt", means such doubt as is based on prejudice or suspicion, and not the doubt which helps in research and the promotion of knowledge.

هُدًى (guidance), as explained under 1:6, signifies: (1) calling to, or

showing, the right path; (2) leading up to the right path; and (3) making one follow the right path till one reaches one's goal or destination.

متقين (the righteous) is derived from اتقى which is derived from وقى. They say وقاه i.e. he guarded or shielded him against evil, etc. اتقى means, he was on his guard against, or he guarded himself against. اتقى به means, he took it or him as a وقاية (shield) for himself (Aqrab). In religious language the word means, to guard oneself against sins or harmful things; or to take God as a shield for protection against sins. It is wrong, therefore, to translate the word as "fear", unless it is for want of a better word. اتقى or اتقا or تقوى means, ever guarding oneself against sins. Ubayy bin Ka'b, a distinguished Companion of the Holy Prophet, aptly explains تقوى by likening متقى to a man who walks through thorny bushes, taking every possible care that his clothes are not caught in, and torn by, the branches (Kathīr). An Arab poet, Ibnul-Mu'tazz, has expressed the same idea in the following beautiful verses:

خل الذنوب صغيرها وكبيرها ذاك التقى  
واصنع كما شئت فوق امرض الشوك يحذر ما يرى  
لا تحقرن صغيرة ان الجبال من الحصى

i.e. "Avoid all sins both small and great—that is تقوى. And act like one who walks through a land full of thorny bushes, cautious of all things that one sees. Do not think lightly of small sins, for even big mountains are made up of tiny pebbles" (Kathīr). A *Muttaqī* (righteous person), therefore, is one who is ever on his guard against sins and takes God for his

shield or shelter.

### Commentary:

The clause ذالك الكتاب (this is a perfect Book) placed in the beginning of the verse, is capable of several interpretations, the following two being more in harmony with the Quranic text:

1. This is a Complete and Perfect Book, a Book which possesses all the excellences that a complete and perfect Book should possess.

2. This is that Book or this is the Book (which you prayed for, or which was promised to you).

Combined with the words لا ريب فيه the full clause ذالك الكتاب لا ريب فيه would mean that this Book is perfect in all respects and contains nothing of ريب in it, i.e. nothing that may make one's mind uneasy, nothing doubtful, nothing that may cause affliction, etc.

A Book claiming to be revealed and demanding acceptance in the presence of other Books which also claim Divine origin must at the very outset make such a claim to set at rest the natural question as to what was the necessity of a new Book when already so many Books existed in the world. So the Quran, in the very beginning, asserts that of all Books it alone is perfect, satisfying human needs in a perfect manner.

The above claim of the Quran is capable of detailed substantiation. Briefly, however, it is founded on the comprehensiveness of its teaching. The Quran deals clearly and adequately with all important questions such as God and His attributes; the origin, nature and purpose of man; and his life here and

in the hereafter. It instructs man in the regulation of his relations with God and his fellow men in a manner unequalled by other religious Books. It instructs parents and children, husbands and wives and other relatives in their duties. It teaches about wills and inheritance and about the rights of neighbours, employers and employees, rulers and ruled. Above all, it tells how man should conduct himself in relation to God and His Prophets. The other Books either do not teach about these matters at all or their treatment of them is very fragmentary.

The Quran also gives a very systematic account of morals—a subject on which the other Books say either little or nothing. In the Buddhist teaching we have a discussion on the basic instincts of man, but that discussion is very meagre compared with the account of the Quran. The Quran tells us about the roots of instincts, the ends which they serve and the use to which they may rightly be put. It also tells us how instincts become transformed into good or bad moral qualities, and how good qualities may be promoted and bad ones eradicated or discouraged. The Buddhist teaching inculcates the killing of desires but does not tell how bad desires arise and how they can be checked. The Quran teaches about the sources of sin and about the means of damming them.

Dealing with all these subjects in detail, the Quran is yet a book of very small dimensions, a fact which makes the reading, understanding and remembering of it a comparatively easy task. Thousands of persons

know it completely by heart. The claim of the Quran that it is a perfect Book is, therefore, based on fact, and is appropriately made in the beginning of the text.

The second meaning of *ذلك الكتاب* (this is the Book) is that the prayer, *Guide us in the right path*, contained in *Al-Fātiḥah* meets with acceptance in this verse. Man prayed for guidance and guidance has come. "This is the Book" thus means, "this is the Book which contains the guidance prayed for in *Al-Fātiḥah*." The expression may also mean, "This is the Book which was promised to you."

The full meaning of *ذلك الكتاب* (this is a perfect Book) becomes clear when we read it together with the ensuing words *لا ريب فيه هدى للمتقين* i.e. this is a perfect Book; there is nothing of doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous. The first natural reaction to a new message is that of fear lest it should lead one into error or evil; the second reaction is the hope that the message may prove beneficial. Both these reactions—the first negative and the second positive—have thus been addressed in this verse. The Quran is a Perfect Book, because on the one hand there is nothing in the Quran to cause uneasiness or to create doubt or despair, and on the other, there is everything in it which can be a guidance for the God-fearing. Elsewhere in the Quran we read, *Aye! it is in the word of God (more literally, the remembrance of Allah) that hearts can find comfort* (13:29.)

The words, *there is no doubt in it*, do not mean that nobody will ever entertain any doubt about the Quran. The Quran itself refers to objections

that disbelievers raised against it. The words, therefore, only mean that the teaching of the Quran is so rational that a right-thinking person who approaches it impartially cannot but accept it as a guide. Wherry and other Christian critics, thinking that the words, *there is no doubt in it*, have only one meaning, have jumped to the conclusion that the Holy Prophet must have been afraid of the doubtful nature of the Quran. These critics forget that this verse was revealed at Medina after a large part of the Quran had already been revealed. Disbelievers had already raised many objections against it, and it was in reply to these objections that the words were revealed. The imputation of a guilty conscience is therefore utterly false. Assertion of truth and denial of doubt is common to other Scriptures as well. In the Proverbs we read, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them" (Pro. 8:8; see also Isa. 45:19; Tit. 3:8; 1. Tim. 4:9; Rev. 22:6).

Moreover, the word *هريب* does not mean a doubt which helps the investigation of truth but a doubt born of unfounded suspicion. Accordingly, the words *لا هريب فيه* would mean that there is nothing in the Quran which is based on doubt, i.e. everything is based on truth and certainty. The Quran asserts no doctrine or principle without also giving cogent reasons for it.

The word *هريب* also means, "affliction or calamity." The Quran contains nothing that may in any way cause misery or affliction to an individual or a people. It raised nations from the quagmire of moral degradation and

social depravity to the highest pinnacles of worldly and spiritual glory. Little wonder they became convinced through experience that there was not a single commandment by acting upon which they could come to grief.

The word *هريب* is also used in the sense of "evil opinion or false charge or calumny". In this sense the clause would mean that the Quran contains nothing that may, in any way, lay a false charge against anyone. Indeed, the Quran seeks to usurp the right of no one, and it slanders nobody—neither God nor any revealed Book nor any Prophet.

It may seem strange, but is nevertheless true, that religious Books, such as the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, the Old and the New Testament, ascribe to God imperfections of one kind or another. The Quran, on the contrary, declares Him free of all defects, the Most Perfect in Power, Majesty and Holiness. This point will be discussed in detail when we come to the relevant verses.

The Word of God has also come in for much criticism. There is the school which holds the view that revelation is man's own mental response to the problems on which he reflects. Thus, certainty of faith, which comes of the *spoken* Word of God, is denied to man, and there remains no distinction between man's own thoughts and those revealed by God. The Quran exonerates the revealed Books of different religions from the charge that they are not the spoken Word of God but only a reflection of peculiarly sensitive

4. Who believe in <sup>a</sup>the unseen and <sup>b</sup>observe Prayer, and <sup>c</sup>spend out of what We have provided for them;<sup>10</sup>

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ  
الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:95; 6:104; 21:50; 35:19; 36:12; 50:34; 57:26; 67:13. <sup>b</sup>2:44, 84, 111, 278; 5:56; 8:4; 9:71; 20:15; 27:4; 30:32; 31:5; 73:21. <sup>c</sup>2:196, 255, 263, 268; 3:93; 8:4; 9:34; 13:23; 14:32; 22:36; 28:55; 32:17; 42:39.

individuals' own thoughts (4:165). The Quran accepts the Divine origin of the Books of other religions (3:4; 35:25).

The Prophets of God—Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna—also have been calumniated unknowingly by their own followers and knowingly by others. The Quran declares them all to be innocent. Belief in the sinlessness of Prophets is among the cardinal beliefs of Islam (6:125). The Quran also proclaims their innocence individually (20:116; 53:38; 20:23; 20:88; 20:91; 2:103; 21:92; 2:88; 19:14).

To sum up, the words لا ريب فيه would mean: (1) that the Quran contains nothing that may make one's mind uneasy; (2) that there is nothing doubtful in it; every teaching and every statement made in it is supported by arguments; (3) that it contains nothing that may bring misery or affliction to an individual or a nation; And (4) that it contains no accusation against, or low opinion about, any object of faith.

The words هدى للمتقين (guidance for the righteous) bring before us the positive side of the Quran. The reader is assured that the Quran contains not only nothing negative, but also everything positive of the highest order. As explained above, guidance has three stages: (1) showing the right

path; (2) leading one to it; and (3) helping one follow it till reaching the goal. The words, *guidance for the righteous*, therefore, mean that guidance contained in the Quran is limitless, helping man to higher and still higher stages of perfection and making him more and more deserving of the favours of God. The ways and means by which a devotee attains to nearness to his Creator are infinite and unfold themselves one after another without end (29:70). The process of the spiritual advance of man does not stop with death but continues in the life to come (66:9),

The objection has been raised that, if the Quran guides only the righteous, what about those who have not attained righteousness? The objection is groundless. The Quran abounds in verses which prove that it is a guidance not only for the righteous but for all seekers, to whatever stage they may have attained (2:22; 2:186; 3:139; 17:42; 18:55; 30:59).

## 10. Important Words:

يؤمنون (who believe) is derived from آمن i.e. he felt safe, or he placed his trust in. آمنه means, he rendered him safe; he trusted him. آمن به means, he believed him to be true, or he believed in him, or he trusted in him. آمن به means, he became submissive and obedient to him (Aqrab). Thus



the word ايمان (belief) is the opposite of كفر (disbelief). It is particularly used with reference to God and other fundamental objects of faith.

غاب (the unseen) is derived from غاب i.e. he or it became screened or invisible; he went far away and became separated. Thus غيب means, anything unseen, anything invisible or hidden, anything absent or far away (Aqrab & Lane). All objects of faith—God, the Angels, the Books, the Prophets and the Last Day—are unseen. A revealed Book is visible as a book, but the fact that it is a revealed Book is unseen. Similarly, we see the Prophet as a human being, but the fact that he has a mission from God remains unseen. The word غيب however, is not confined to objects of faith alone.

اقام (observe) is derived from اقام. They say اقام الشيء meaning, he set the thing up, or he set the thing erect or upright. اقام again is derived from قام meaning, he stood erect, or he stood up, or he stood still. اقام الصلوة means, he performed his Prayers regularly (Aqrab). اقام الصلوة also means, he performed Prayers in accordance with all the prescribed conditions (Mufradāt).

الصلوة (Prayer) is derived from صلى i.e. he prayed. The word gives different meanings with reference to different objects. When used about God, it means, He showed mercy to, or bestowed praise on; used about the angels, it means, they asked forgiveness for men, etc.; and used about man it means, he prayed. In Islam the word الصلوة has generally come to mean the prescribed form of Prayer (Aqrab).

هزقناهم (We have provided for them) is from هزق i.e. he provided or he gave. هزق means, a thing whereby one profits, or from which one derives an advantage; any article of food; any means of sustenance; anything bestowed by God on man, material or otherwise (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

ينفقون (they spend) is derived from نفق. They say نفق الشيء i.e. the thing became spent up or reduced. انفق means, he spent freely and constantly so as to reduce his wealth (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

In this verse three important qualities of a متقى (*muttaqī*) have been mentioned: (1) a believer in the unseen; (2) steadfast in Prayer; and (3) spending out of what God has provided for him. Of these the first relates to faith or belief which must always come first; the other two relate to actions. Belief in the unseen does not mean blind belief or belief in things which cannot be grasped or understood. Nothing can be farther from the spirit of the Quran than to imagine that it demands from Muslims belief which reason and understanding do not support. The Quran strongly denounces such beliefs. True faith, according to it, is that which is supported by reason and argument (53:23; 46:5; 30:36; 6:149, 150; 25:74).

Moreover, the word غيب used in the Quran does not mean, as assumed by some hostile critics, imaginary and unreal things, but real and verified things, though unseen (49:19; 32:7). It is, therefore, wrong to suppose, as

Wherry has done in his Commentary, that Islam forces upon its followers some mysteries of faith and invites them to believe in them blindly. It is Christianity which forces on its followers mysteries like Trinity in Unity and the Sonship of Jesus, completely beyond human understanding and human reason.

The word *غيب* as stated above, means things which, though beyond the comprehension of human senses, can nevertheless be proved by reason or experience. The supersensible need not necessarily be irrational. Nothing of "the unseen" which a Muslim is called upon to believe is outside the scope of reason. There are many things in the world which, though unseen, are yet proved to exist by invincible arguments, and nobody can deny their existence. God cannot be perceived by the physical senses nor, for that matter, can angels or life after death. But can the existence of God and the angels be denied because of this? Can life after death be denied because it remains unseen?

The words, *who believe in the unseen*, may also mean that the Faithful discharge their duties and perform their acts of worship without a bargaining spirit. They are above such bargaining. They suffer hardships, undergo tribulations and make sacrifices not for the sake of any visible or immediate reward, but out of a selfless desire to serve the large and, as it were, invisible cause of community or country or humanity at large. This is all believing in the unseen.

Another meaning of the word *غيب* as

given above, is the state of being hidden from the public eye. In this sense, the expression would mean that the faith of a true believer is ever firm and steadfast, whether he is in the company of other believers or is alone. The faith that needs constant watching and exhortation is not worth much. True and real faith has roots deep in the heart of the Faithful and lives by itself. It does not fail or falter when a Muslim is deprived of the company of other Muslims or even when surrounded by disbelievers. Such faith is described in 21:50 and 57:26.

The second quality of *متقى* relates to actions. According to the different meanings of *أقام الصلاة* explained above, the expression, *observe Prayer*, would mean: 1. That a Muslim should observe Prayers throughout his life, keeping constant vigil over them. In fact, irregular Prayers are no prayers (70:35). 2. That he should say Prayers regularly at their appointed hours and in accordance with the rules prescribed for them (4:104). 3. That he should say his Prayers in a true spirit and not allow them to be spoilt by wandering thoughts which may disturb and distract his attention (23:3). 4. That he should say his Prayers in congregation (2:44). 5. That he should also exhort others to say their Prayers regularly and thus help to spread the habit (20:133).

Prayer is not a form of bargaining with God, in which a Muslim looks for something in return. Islam strongly repudiates this idea and describes Prayers as a purifying agent for man himself. Through worship man attains certainty of knowledge

which dispels doubt and helps to establish a real and living contact between him and his Creator.

There is a tendency to condemn institutional worship as useless and ceremonial. Worship, it is said, is an attitude of the mind and should be confined strictly to it. There is no doubt that attitudes belong to the mind and if the mind is corrupt, humility of the body can be of no avail. A person whose heart is unimpressed by the Majesty and Glory of God and who yet sings His praise is a hypocrite; but so also is the person who claims to accept a certain truth, yet his body and behaviour show no signs of it. When a person is in love, his face betrays a peculiar emotion when the beloved appears before him. Parents fondle and kiss their children and friends express their affection by visible movements. These demonstrations of affection are spontaneous, not assumed. It is, therefore, impossible that a man should love God and entertain a true longing for Him, but should not seek to express this love or longing by some outward acts; and this is the secret of all worship. Worship is the outer expression of the inner relationship of man with God. Moreover, God's favours surround the body as well as the soul. Thus, perfect worship is only that in which body and soul both play their part. Without the two the true spirit of worship cannot be preserved, for though adoration by the heart is the substance and adoration by the body only the shell, yet the substance cannot be preserved without the shell. If the shell is destroyed, the substance

is bound to meet with a similar fate.

Besides other advantages, Prayers in congregation, as Muslim Prayers always are, foster the spirit of brotherhood. Five times a day believers, both rich and poor, have to stand unceremoniously together, shoulder to shoulder, and offer their humble supplications to God. The busiest and the biggest of them have to find the time and join in this united act of worship. Such a fellowship cannot but wholesomely impact the worshippers' hearts.

Incidentally, it may also be remarked that the outward form of the Islamic Prayer includes all the poses of the body expressive of humility, i.e. standing with folded arms, bowing, prostrating, and sitting with folded knees, each pose being allotted a corresponding prayer. Besides the prescribed Prayers, one is free to pray in one's own words and one's own way.

The expression, *they spend out of what We have provided for them*, includes not only spending in the cause of Allah but also spending for the welfare of the individual and the community. The words used here are used in their widest possible sense. Wealth, power, influence, physical and intellectual capacities—in short, all that one may receive from God—must be devoted, partly at least, to the well-being of others.

The beneficiaries of this injunction are not confined to the poor alone. All who have claims over the belongings of a Muslim are entitled to a share in them. The injunction applies to a mother who gives suck

5. And who believe in that which has been <sup>a</sup>revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and they have firm faith in <sup>b</sup>what is yet to come.<sup>11</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ  
وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَالْآخِرَةُ  
هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ۝

<sup>a</sup>2:137, 286; 3:200; 4:61, 137, 163; 5:60. <sup>b</sup>4:70; 7:36; 61:7; 62:4.

to her child, to a father who spends upon the education and upbringing of his children, to a husband who provides for the needs of his wife, and to the children who serve their parents. The commandment is aptly explained in the famous ḥadīth: "Your self has a claim upon you, and your Lord has a claim upon you, and your guest has a claim upon you, and your family has a claim upon you. So you should give to everyone his due" (Tirmidhī).

The verse, in short, lays down three directions and describes three stages for the spiritual well-being of man:

1. A Muslim should believe in the truths which are hidden from his eyes and beyond his physical senses, for it is such a belief that proves he is possessed of the right sort of تقوى or righteousness. An intelligent person does not remain satisfied with natural phenomena as he sees them, but looks deeper into their source and origin; and it is this delving into the depths of the unknown that leads to great knowledge and great achievement. All this comes under "belief in the unseen" which has special reference to God, Who is the source of all creation.

2. When the believer reflects on

the creation of the universe and the marvellous order and design which exists in it and when, as a result of this reflection, he becomes convinced of the existence of the Creator, an irresistible longing to have a real and true union with Him takes hold of him. This finds consummation in إقامة الصلاة or observance of Prayer.

3. Lastly, when the believer succeeds in establishing a living contact with his Creator, he feels an inward urge to serve his fellow beings who, being the creatures of his own Lord and Master, are members of the large family to which he himself belongs. So, in order to meet their needs and requirements, he spends willingly and freely out of the wealth, knowledge or anything else which God has given him.

### 11. Important Words:

انزل (has been revealed) is derived from نزل which means, he descended; or he came down. The literal meaning of the transitive form انزل would, therefore, be, he sent down, or he caused to descend. Figuratively, however, the word has come to be used about anything bestowed by God on man. God being high, everything that comes from Him may be said to descend from above. When

used with reference to God's Word, انزل would mean, He revealed. Thus we say, انزل الله كلامه in the sense of اوجى i.e. God revealed His word (Aqrab).

الآخرة (what is yet to come) is derived from اخر. They say اخره i.e. he put it back; he put it behind; he postponed it. The word الآخرة which is the feminine of الآخر i.e. the last one or the latter one, is used as an epithet or an adjective opposed to الاول i.e. the first one. الآخر with a different vowel-point in the central letter, means, "the other" or "another" (Aqrab). The object which the adjective الآخرة in the verse qualifies is understood, most commentators taking it to be الدار, the full expression thus being الدار الآخرة (the last abode). The context, however, shows that here the word understood is not الدار but الرسالة i.e. الرسالة الآخرة (the message or revelation which is to come). The word; الآخرة has, therefore, been rightly translated here as "that (i.e. the revelation) which is yet to come".

يؤمنون (they have firm faith) is derived from ايقن which again is derived from يقن i.e. it became clear and established. ايقن الامر means, he knew the matter well and made sure of it; he was certain about it. يقين means, certainty; becoming sure of a thing beyond doubt; anything sure and established (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse describes three more qualities of a متقى i.e. a righteous person. In the previous verse mention was made of faith in general. But as a true believer seeks to know the details of تقوى (righteousness) in order to perfect his faith, he is told here that

for its consummation he must believe in the Holy Prophet and through him in the previous Prophets, and must at the same time believe in "what is yet to come". Thus, belief in the Holy Prophet is the central point so far as belief in the Prophets of God is concerned, and no person can become متقى (a truly righteous person) unless he believes in the Holy Prophet.

From the words, *that which has been revealed to thee*, quite an erroneous inference is sometimes drawn to the effect that it is belief in the Quran and not belief in the Holy Prophet that is enjoined. This view the Quran forcefully contradicts. Besides making it clear in several places that belief in the Prophet is as essential as belief in the Book (e.g. 2:286; 4:66; 4:137), the Quran makes the point clear in another way also. At one place we have, *He it is Who has sent down to you the Book clearly explained* (6:115), and at another, *and in like manner have We sent down the Book to thee (O Prophet)* (29:48). The fact that God sometimes speaks of the Quran as having been sent to the people and sometimes to the Prophet is not without point. In fact, the difference in construction is full of meaning; for where the Quran is spoken of as having been sent to the people, the intention is to point out that the Quranic teaching is suitable and appropriate for them and is meant for their good; and where the Quran is spoken of as having been sent to the Prophet, the intention is to emphasize that he is not merely the bearer of a message but is the person best fitted to explain the message he has brought and to

become an exemplar of the teaching contained in the message. Elsewhere God says, *Allah knows best where to place His message* (6:125), which is a clear proof of the fact that a Prophet is not merely the bearer of a message, but is selected by God for a higher purpose, i.e. to become a model for his followers; otherwise, anybody can be sent as a bearer of a message and the question of special selection does not arise.

The words, *and that which was revealed before thee*, illustrate a special characteristic of Islam, i.e. it not only recognizes the truth of all previous Prophets but makes it obligatory upon its followers to believe in the Divine origin of the teachings they brought with them (see also 13:8; 35:25). But it must be remembered that Islam is a complete and final teaching which has superseded all previous teachings. Belief in them, therefore, is only in the sense of reverence for them and not in the sense that a Muslim should act upon them. That is why in the verse under comment God mentions the earlier Scriptures after the Quran and not before it, as the chronological order required, so that the attention of the believers may be drawn to the fact that belief in the previous books is based on the Quran and is not independent of it.

According to the Quran (35:25), Prophets have appeared among all peoples and all nations and we are commanded to believe in all previous revelations, and thus an effective step has been taken to promote peace and harmony among the followers of different religions. The verse applies

to no particular Book. Any earlier Book which claims Divine origin and has been accepted for a long time and by a large section of mankind to be the Word of God falls within the meaning of this verse.

The word *الآخرة* (what is yet to come) means either "the message or revelation which is to follow" or "the Last Abode", i.e. the next life. Of these two meanings the first is more applicable here; for it fits in with the other two parts of the verse which speak of God's revelations. In this connection it is also noteworthy that while the word *ایمان* has been used in reference to the past and present revelations, the word *یقین* has been used in reference to the future ones. This is because *ایمان* relates to something definite and determined, and as the future revelation was not yet definite and determined at the time when the verse was revealed, so the word *یقین* was used for it.

The subject of the latter part of this verse, referred to in the words, *what is yet to come*, finds further exposition in 62:3, 4 where the Quran speaks of two advents of the Holy Prophet. His first advent took place among the Arabs in the 7th century of the Christian era when the Quran was revealed to him; and his second advent was to take place in the latter days of the world in the person of one of his followers who was to come in his spirit and power. This prophecy found its fulfilment in the person of Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islam, in whose advent have been fulfilled also the prophecies of other Prophets

6. It is they who <sup>a</sup>follow the guidance of their Lord and it is they <sup>b</sup>who shall prosper.<sup>12</sup>

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦﴾

7. Those who have disbelieved—<sup>c</sup>it being equal to them whether thou warn them or warn them not—they will not believe.<sup>13</sup>

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:158; 31:6. <sup>b</sup>23:2; 28:68; 87:15; 91:10. <sup>c</sup>4:169, 170; 26:137; 36:11.

regarding the appearance of a World-Messenger in the Latter Days.

## 12. Important Words:

المفلحون (those who shall prosper) is derived from افلح i.e. he was successful and attained what he desired or sought. When we say افلح زيد we mean, Zaid reaped the fruits of his labour and his endeavours proved successful (Aqrah). Thus مفلح is one who is successful and attains what he desires and reaps the fruits of his labour. The word is also used about one who acquires any substantial good, be it material or spiritual, the word نال being used for such success or gain as others may envy (Tāj).

The word على in the clause على هدى is significant. If the idea had been of simple guidance, the Quran could easily have used the words اولئك هم المهتدون. But it leaves the common construction and uses the words على هدى which literally mean, they are on guidance or, in other words, they are mounted on guidance. Guidance becomes, as it were, a riding animal for them which they conveniently use in their march towards God. The construction is not peculiar to the

Quran. The Arabs say of a person steeped in ignorance جعل الغواية مركبا i.e. such a one has made error and ignorance a riding beast for himself (Kashshāf).

## Commentary:

The verse explains that when a man has fulfilled all the conditions of تقوى (righteousness) in respect of both belief and actions, then he may be sure not only of being rightly guided but also of being a master of guidance whose success in this life as well as in the life to come is assured. The words على هدى (lit. on guidance) also hint that as the believer prayed for guidance in the opening chapter of the Quran, so guidance of the highest order has been provided for him—a guidance on which he can ride comfortably and speed on happily towards his Lord and Master.

## 13. Important Words:

كفروا (they disbelieved) is derived from كفر which is the opposite of آمن and means, he disbelieved. The literal meaning of كفر (kufir) is ستر الشيء i.e. to cover up a thing. Thence it has also come to mean "ungratefulness" and

8. Allah "has set a seal on their hearts and their ears, and over their eyes is a covering; and for them is a great punishment."<sup>14</sup>

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ  
وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ  
عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

<sup>14</sup>4:156; 6:26, 47; 7:102, 180; 10:75; 16:109; 45:24; 83:15.

"disbelief" (Aqrab). When the word is used singly, without any qualifying word, it means the rejection of any fundamental object of faith, i.e. the Unity of God or the prophethood of the Holy Prophet, or the Holy Book, etc (Mufradât).

ءانذركم (whether thou warn them). نذر is derived from نذر. They say نذر الشيء i.e. he knew the danger underlying the thing and was on his guard against it. انذر is the transitive form of نذر; so انذره means, he warned him of a coming danger. نذير means, a warner (Aqrab). The همزة (hamzah) used in the beginning of the word انذركم does not give the meaning of interrogation. It is simply used to make the word infinitive, and the clause beginning with it would be taken to mean whether thou warn them or warn them not. It is a parenthetical clause which goes to qualify the words, *those who have disbelieved* (Mufradât).

### Commentary:

After speaking of the class of true believers and describing the high stage of faith, God now speaks of the extreme type of disbelievers who have become so indifferent to truth that it matters not whether they receive a warning or not. Of such disbelievers it has been declared that as long as their present condition

continues, they will not believe. The verse does not at all mean that no disbeliever will henceforward believe. The idea is not only repugnant to the teaching of the Quran but is also opposed to all established facts of history; for people continued to embrace Islam even after this verse was revealed. Again, it was after this verse that the *Sûrah* النصر (Ch.110) was revealed to the Holy Prophet, in which God spoke to him saying that people would soon begin to join Islam in very large numbers (110:3), and so it actually came to pass. In short, the words, *they will not believe*, refer only to such disbelievers as turn a deaf ear to the warnings of the Prophet, and to them also the words apply only so long as they do not change their present condition. A person who turns a deaf ear to a warning today but begins to heed it tomorrow does not, indeed cannot, come under the so-called ban.

### 14. Important Words:

ختم (set a seal) means, he set a seal on; or he stamped a thing so that there should remain no likelihood of its being regarded as forged. خاتم means, a seal (Aqrab). The expression ختم الله على قلبه (lit. God has set a seal on his heart) means, God made his heart such that it could neither understand



anything nor could anything come out of it, i.e. it could not make itself understood by others (Baqā).

قلوب (hearts) is the plural of قلب (qalaba). They say قلب الشيء i.e. he turned the thing; or he turned it upside down or inside out, etc. قلب means, the heart, or the central point of a thing. The word قلب is also used in the sense of عقل i.e. reason, as well as for such qualities as knowledge, courage and spirit (Aqrab). It also signifies the faculty of thinking and reasoning, i.e. the mind (Lisān).

السمع (the ears) is derived from سمع i.e. he heard. سمع has three different meanings (1) the ear or ears; (2) the sense of hearing; (3) the sound which one hears (Aqrab).

ابصار (eyes) is the plural of بصر (eye). They say باصر (baṣura) or باصرا (baṣira), i.e. he saw, or he perceived, or he knew. بصر means: (1) the eye; (2) the sense of sight; and (3) knowledge (Aqrab).

العذاب (punishment) is derived from عذب (adhaba). They say عذب الرجل i.e. the man left off eating, owing to intense thirst. عذب عنه means, he kept back from it. عذب فلانا means, he prevented him or deprived him. عذب الشراب والطعام means, the drink and food became good and tasteful. عذب الماء means, the water became very dirty. عذبه (adhhabahū) means, he inflicted pain or punishment on him; he detained him; he prevented or deprived him (Aqrab). تعذيب means, inflicting pain or punishment; forcing a man to remain without food and sleep; depriving one of the sweetness or goodness of life; making life miserable (Mufradāt). Thus عذاب

means, anything which is hard and painful for man and prevents him from attaining his object; pain inflicted as punishment in order to prevent one from repeating an act or prevent others from doing the same; the inflicting of such punishment; anything that deprives a person of the sweetness of life and makes life miserable; anything that prevents a man from attaining the object of his life (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

The verse refers to the disbelievers mentioned in the last verse and explains how they have reached their present woeful condition. It is a common observation that organs which remain unused for a long time become dead and useless. The eyes lose their sight and the ears their hearing if they remain out of use, and the limbs become stunted for the same reason. The disbelievers mentioned here refused to employ their hearts and ears for the comprehension of the truth, and as a result their capacities for hearing and understanding were lost. It is thus only the natural consequence of wilful indifference which is described in the clause, *Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their ears, and over their eyes is a covering*. As all laws proceed from God, the final Controller of the universe, and every cause is followed by its natural effect under His will, so the sealing of the hearts and the ears of disbelievers is ascribed to Him. It is, therefore, a mistake to take the verse to mean that as God had Himself sealed up their hearts, so the disbelievers could not believe. The Quran contradicts this

**R. 2.**

9. And of the people there are some who say, "We believe in Allah and the Last Day;" while they are not believers at all.<sup>15</sup>

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝٩

<sup>15</sup>2:178; 3:115; 4:40, 60; 6:93; 58:23.

view and states clearly that it is the disbelievers themselves who seal their fate and God's seal follows only as a result of their action (see 4:156; 40:36; 47:25; 83:15). Says the Holy Prophet: "When a man commits a sin, a black spot is thereby formed on his heart. Then if he repents and gives up the sin and asks God's forgiveness, the black spot is washed off, leaving the heart clean. But if he repents not and commits another sin, another black spot is formed on his heart and so on, until his whole heart is covered with a black covering, and that is the covering of rust to which the Quran refers in *Sūrah Taṭfīf*" (Jarīr).

It may also be noted that in the present verse the word "ears" has been put before the word "eyes". This is in conformity with the law of nature that the ears of a newborn baby begin to function earlier than the eyes.

**15. Important Words:**

آمن (we believe) is derived from امان (belief or faith) for which see 2:4. The word امان (belief or faith) does not consist in a lip-profession of truth, or a vague realization of it. It combines three necessary elements, viz. (1) conviction of mind; (2) profession by tongue; and (3) demonstration through actions (Mufradāt). The Quran itself explains امان in this light (49:15; 27:15).

**Commentary:**

After describing the condition of believers (vv. 4-6) and that of disbelievers (vv. 7-8) the Quran proceeds to describe the condition of a third group, the hypocrites. They intermingled with the believers and posed as such. They were divided into two classes: (1) disbelievers at heart but united with the believers for the sake of some material or communal advantages; (2) believers at heart but lacking the strength of conviction necessary for thorough conversion and complete obedience. The reference here is to the first class of hypocrites, those who mixed with the believers but did not at heart believe in the truth of Islam.

It may be noted that only God and the Last Day are mentioned here, other Islamic beliefs being left out. This has led some to think that Islam requires belief only in God and the Last Day. The truth, however, is that 'God' and the 'Last Day' are respectively the first and the last items in the Islamic formula of faith and a profession of them *ipso facto* implies profession of the other items. Elsewhere the Quran clearly states how belief in the Last Day implies belief in angels as well as in the Divine Books (6:93).

The omission may also be

10. They "would deceive Allah and those who believe, and they deceive none but themselves; only they perceive it not.<sup>16</sup>

يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ  
وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝

<sup>a</sup>4:143.

explained in another way. The hypocrites wanted to deceive the believers, so possibly they expressed themselves purposely in these words, omitting all reference to the Prophet and the Quran. By mentioning God and the Last Day they would induce believers to think that they subscribed fully to the Islamic faith, but in their hearts they made a reservation as regards belief in the Quran and the Prophet. This interpretation finds support in the following verse which says that the hypocrites wished to deceive the believers. The expression, *they are not believers at all*, has been used to intensify the repudiation of the claim of the hypocrites to be believers. If a mere negation of their claim had been intended, it would have been expressed by some such expression as "they are hypocrites".

Strong denunciation of hypocrites is characteristic of the Quran (3:168; 5:42 & 5:62). According to the Quran, hypocrites are sheer disbelievers. This view of the Quran furnishes a strong refutation of the criticism that Islam permits the use of force in religious matters. Conversion by force can never be sincere, while the Quran insists upon sincerity in believers. A religion which makes sincerity a necessary quality of belief cannot tolerate, much less encourage, the use of force in religion.

### 16. Important Words:

يُخَدِّعُونَ (would deceive) is derived from خَدَعَ and يَخْدَعُونَ (deceive) is derived from خَدَعَ. They say خَدَعَهُ i.e. he deceived him; he made a show of what he was not; he tried to harm him in a way unknown to the latter. خَادِعُهُ is sometimes loosely used to give the same meaning as خَدَعَ but in reality it is different. خَادِع is used when the deceiver is not successful in his attempt at deception and خَدَعَ is used when the party intended to be deceived actually falls a victim to the deception (Baqā & Aqrab). This distinction is corroborated by Lane who says, "One says of a man خَادِع when he has not attained his desire, and خَدَعَ when he has attained his desire." The word خَادِع also means: (1) he forsook or he abandoned; (2) it (the market) was variable. They say سَوَقٌ خَادِعَةٌ i.e. a market varying in its state, at one time brisk, at another dull in respect of traffic (Lane). Following this signification يَخْدَعُونَ اللَّهَ would mean (1) they forsake and abandon God; and (2) they are variable with respect to Allah, believing at one time and disbelieving at another.

يَشْعُرُونَ (they perceive) is derived from شَعَرَ. They say شَعَرَهُ meaning, he perceived it; he came to know of it; he understood it; he felt it (Aqrab).

شعور is the faculty of insight not depending upon the senses for its exercise, something that rises from within. In the verse the word يشعرون has been used to signify that though the disease of the hypocrites lies in their hearts, yet their insight gives them no warning.

### Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that effective faith is based upon truth and sincerity. Faith not so based amounts to deception and God cannot be deceived.

The verse has given rise to some objections: 1. How can it be possible for any man to deceive God? 2. The word يخادعون is derived from the verb خادع in the measure of مفاعلة which denotes two parties mutually engaged in the same operation. The words يخادعون الله would, therefore, mean that hypocrites and God are both engaged in deceiving each other.

In answer to the first objection it may be said that the word used here is خادع and not خدع, the former, as explained above, signifying only an attempt at deception and not actual deception. The objection is, therefore, without foundation.

The second objection also does not hold good. The measure مفاعلة does not always carry the sense of mutual participation. Sometimes it signifies only one of the parties so engaged. For example, in the sentence عاقبت اللص meaning, "I punished the thief" the word عاقبت belongs to the measure of مفاعلة, yet here it does not denote mutual participation in the act. It only means, I punished the thief.

A note on the hypocrites will not be

out of place here. Before the coming of Islam into Medina, the city's inhabitants included two pagan Arab tribes known as *Aus* and *Khazraj*, and three Jewish tribes named *Banū Quraizah*, *Banū Naḍīr* and *Banū Qainuqā'*. The two pagan tribes outnumbered the Jews but were inferior to them in wealth and education. The Jews thus exercised great influence over the pagans of Medina. In order to further increase their influence, they encouraged internecine feuds among their idolatrous neighbours. A few years before the rise of Islam the pagan tribes of Medina, realizing how they had been duped, decided to organize themselves under a duly elected king. Their choice fell upon one 'Abdullāh bin Ubayy, chief of the tribe of *Khazraj*, and they were preparing for his coronation when news came to them of the rise of Islam in Mecca. Events suddenly began to take a different turn. The idolatrous tribes of *Aus* and *Khazraj* became attracted towards Islam and began to embrace the new faith in large numbers, believing that the solution of their difficulties lay not in electing a king but in accepting Islam. Soon after the Holy Prophet migrated to Medina, the tide of enthusiasm became irresistible; and 'Abdullāh bin Ubayy and his party felt it wise to follow their tribesmen into the new faith. They did not realize at the time that the establishment of Islam would mean the frustration of their own hopes. When, however, the power of Islam became established, they realized that they had put an end to their hopes. This realization

11. "In their hearts was a disease and Allah has increased their disease to them; and for them is a grievous punishment because they lied.<sup>17</sup>

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ ۖ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ  
مَرَضًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۚ بِمَا كَانُوا  
يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:53; 9:125; 74:32.

destroyed any attachment they had for Islam. Instead, they developed actual hostility towards it. However, as a preponderant majority of their tribesmen had already become zealous followers of Islam, they could not openly leave its fold. Thus came into being the hypocrites—a party professing Islam outwardly but hostile to it at heart. Not strong enough to oppose Islam openly, they naturally thought of entering into a secret alliance with the Jews in order to injure the cause of Islam. In the beginning they had nothing to do with the Meccans for whom they bore a long-standing tribal antipathy. After the Battle of Uḥud, however, at the instigation of the Jews and prompted by their own jealousy, they forgot their enmity and began to secretly conspire with the Quraish of Mecca, keeping up a show of attachment for Islam. Their leader ‘Abdullāh continued to accompany the Holy Prophet in many of his expeditions.

In the Quran this party of hypocrites is mentioned in several places. Their last act of hostility towards Islam was their attempt, after the Fall of Mecca, to conspire with the Byzantine Christian power. The occasion was the Tabūk expedition led by the Holy Prophet in the ninth year of Hijrah. The attempt met with discomfiture. It was probably the

shock of its failure that caused, only two months later, the death of ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy. The party then broke up. Some of its members entered Islam sincerely; others ended their days in obscurity.

### 17. Important Words:

مرض (disease) is derived from مرض i.e. he fell ill; he lost his health. Thus مرض means, anything whereby a man loses his health (physical, moral or spiritual); disease or hypocrisy; doubt or darkness or loss; omission of any kind (Aqrab); any disease or any physical or moral weakness or defect of faith, in fact, anything that hinders man's physical, moral or spiritual progress (Mufradāt).

يكذبون (they lie) is derived from كذب which means, he lied; he said what was untrue while he knew the truth; he gave a wrong account of something, whether intentionally or unintentionally; it (the heart or the eye) felt or perceived wrongly (Aqrab); he said what was true but said it insincerely, i.e. he himself believed the thing to be untrue (the Quran 63:2). كذب (kadhdhaba) is the causative or transitive form from كذب. They say كذبه i.e. he accused him of lying; he attributed falsehood to him in his claim or statement; he pronounced him a liar. به كذب means, he rejected and disbelieved it. كاذب

12. And when it is said to them:  
<sup>a</sup>“Create not disorder on the  
 earth,” they say: ‘We are only  
 promoters of peace.’<sup>18</sup>

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:28, 221.

means a liar, and كذاب means a great and habitual liar. كذب (*kadhib*) and كذاب (*kidhdhāb*) mean, falsehood, lie, untruth; also the act of uttering a lie. كذاب also means the act of accusing one of lying (Lane & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

God speaks of two diseases of the heart: (1) كفر i.e. disbelief; and (2) نفاق i.e. hypocrisy. The former has already been referred to in verses 7 and 8. The present verse refers to the disease of hypocrisy and points out that those suffering from it do not act as normal healthy persons do.

The Holy Prophet has mentioned the following signs of hypocrisy. Says he: "When a hypocrite speaks, he lies; and when he makes a promise, he does not fulfil it; and when he is entrusted with anything, he acts dishonestly and when he makes a contract, he breaks it; and when he engages in a dispute, he uses foul words" (Bukhārī).

In the verse under comment the increase of hypocrisy is attributed to God, not because God increases it but because the increase results from disregard of His commands; also because it is God who finally dispenses the good and evil consequences of human actions. The Quran has only been revealed for healing diseases. Says Allah: *O mankind! There has come to you an*

*exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts* (10:58).

The increasing of disease also means that the expanding power of Islam was naturally increasing the disease of the hypocrites who were all the more forced to remain, against their will, in outward friendliness with the Muslims.

In the case of disbelievers the punishment mentioned is عذاب عظيم (great punishment), whereas in the case of hypocrites it is عذاب اليم (grievous punishment). This is because disbelievers express their disbelief and enmity openly, while hypocrites keep their feelings of hatred and malice concealed in their hearts, thinking that they are thereby deriving twofold pleasure—one of enmity towards Islam and the other, of befooling the Muslims. So the retribution in store for the hypocrites is characterized by special pain and anguish—a fit recompense for their false pleasure.

### 18. Important Words:

تفسدوا (create disorder) is derived from افسد which is derived from فسد (*fasuda*) or فسد (*fasada*), i.e. he or it became corrupt or evil or vitiated or spoiled or tainted or in an altered state or in a disordered or disturbed condition, etc. The word is the opposite of صلح. The transitive form افسد means,

13. Beware! it is surely they who create disorder, but they do not perceive it.<sup>19</sup>

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

he or it made (it or him) bad or corrupt or vitiated or spoiled, or put (it or him) in a disordered or disturbed condition, or simply he created disorder, etc. The word is the opposite of *اصلح* for which see below (Lane).

*الارض* (the earth) means: (1) the earth or the globe; (2) part of the earth, i.e. a land or country; (3) ground or surface of the earth; (4) floor; (5) anything that is spread on the floor; (6) anything that is low; (7) shivering or tremor (Lane).

*مصلحون* (promoters of peace) is derived from *اصلح* which is derived from *صلح* i.e. he or it became good or proper or righteous or in a state of order, etc. They say *هذا الشيء يصلح لك* i.e. this thing is suitable or fit or meet for you. *اصلح* means, he or it made him or it good or proper or righteous, or put him or it in a state of order, etc. *اصلح* also means, he corrected or reformed or improved; or he promoted or brought about peace, harmony or reconciliation. It also means, he performed a good and right act (Lane).

### Commentary:

The hypocrites tried to create disturbance in various ways: (1) they tried to sow discord among the Muslims by instigating the *انصار* i.e. Medinite helpers against the *مهاجرين* i.e. Meccan refugees (63:8, 9); (2) sometimes they imputed motives to the Holy Prophet in the distribution of alms (9:58), or his system of gathering information (9:61); (3) sometimes they tried to undermine the spirit of the

Muslims (9:50), or to demoralize them by spreading rumours (4:84); (4) sometimes they encouraged non-Muslims to fight against Muslims (59:12).

In the present verse reference is made to the double-dealing of the hypocrites. Confronted with this, the hypocrites invariably pleaded that they were prompted by nothing but sincerity of purpose and that their intention was not to create ill-will but to establish mutual cordiality and peace. This is the typical defence of all mischief-makers.

The presence of hypocrites and malcontents is inevitable in every organised society. In a society, not properly organised, it is easy for disaffected members to leave. But in a well organised community, the malcontents find it difficult to leave. So they remain within and carry on their nefarious activities secretly. The presence of hypocrites is not a sign of weakness but rather of strength in a community. But this should not make a community neglectful about them. On the contrary, it is imperative that malcontents and hypocrites should be closely watched and properly dealt with, as and when circumstances require. The Holy Prophet was ever watchful of this class.

### 19. Important Words:

*ولكن* (and but) is a combination of two words, *و* (and) and *لكن* (but). Ordinarily, only one of these words

14. And when it is said to them, 'Believe as *other* people have believed,' they say: 'Shall we believe as the foolish people have believed?' Beware! it is surely they that are foolish but they do not know.<sup>20</sup>

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

would have sufficed, but they have been used together to intensify the meaning.

### Commentary:

In the last verse the hypocrites insinuated that it was not they but the main body of Muslims who caused disorder. The reply to this insinuation is given in the present verse in the emphatic words, *Beware! it is surely they who create disorder.*

The last words of the verse signify that the hypocrites lack the faculty of insight. If, instead of fabricating a defence for their duplicity, they had tried only to study their own mind, they could have easily perceived that it was not the desire of peace or reform but cowardice and jealousy that prompted their loathsome conduct.

### 20. Important Words:

سُفَهَاء (foolish people) which is the plural of سَفِيْه is derived from سَفِه i.e. he was or became light-witted or ignorant. The word سَفِيْه means: 1. simple or light-witted or foolish; 2. ignorant; 3. fickle and inconstant; 4. weak in intelligence; 5. one whose opinion is of no consequence; 6. one who squanders away his wealth and property without consideration (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lisān).

يعلمون (they know) is derived from علم i.e. he knew. علمه means: 1. he knew it or became acquainted with it; 2. he knew it thoroughly so as to base his belief on it (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The verse means that when the believers asked the hypocrites to be sincere in their faith, the hypocrites would say that the believers were like fools squandering away their lives and property, a mere handful of men who had taken up the fight against the whole country.

The hypocrites called true Muslims "fools" because they thought they (the hypocrites) could protect their own lives and property by maintaining friendly relations with the disbelievers; while the true Muslims, on account of their complete estrangement from disbelievers, were exposing their lives and possessions to constant danger. Muslims were also given to spending recklessly on religion. Such allegations are contained in 5:59; 8:50; 9:79 & 63:8. God replies to them by saying: *Their possessions and their children should not excite thy wonder; Allah only intends to punish them therewith in this world, that their souls may depart while they are disbelievers* (9:85). The verse



15. And <sup>a</sup>when they meet those who believe, they say, ‘We believe’; but when they are alone with their ringleaders, they say, ‘We are certainly with you; <sup>b</sup>we are only mocking.’<sup>21</sup>

وَإِذَا الْقَوَالِدِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا  
خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيْطَانِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ  
إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ ٥١

<sup>a</sup>2:77; 3:120; 5:62. <sup>b</sup>9:64, 65.

means that soon the hypocrites would witness the ruin of their possessions, while Muslims would prosper. Success and prosperity come, not of cowardice and stinginess, but of courage and sacrifice, and the hypocrites were hopelessly lacking in both these qualities.

In fulfilment of this prophecy ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy, the hypocrite leader, lived to see the frustration of his designs against Islam and his only son became a true and zealous Muslim.

## 21. Important Words:

خلوا (they are alone) is derived from خلا i.e. he was alone. They say الرجل خلا i.e. the man was alone in a place. خلا المكان means, the house became empty and untenanted. خلا الشيء means, the thing passed away. خلا به or خلا اليه means, he was alone with him; he met him in private (Aqrab). خلا فلان means, he died (Lisān).

شياطين (ringleaders) is the plural of شيطان (satan) which is either derived from (1) شطن or (2) شاط (Mufradāt). شطن means, he was or became distant or remote from him or it. شطن صاحبه means, he opposed his comrade and turned him from his intention or course (Aqrab). Derived from this root the word شيطان would mean, the

being who is not only himself far from truth but also turns others away from it.

The other derivation is from شاط which means, he burnt: he perished. Derived from this root the word شيطان would mean, the being who burns with hate and anger and is lost.

In common usage the word شيطان means: (1) the wicked or Evil Spirit, i.e. Satan; (2) anybody who greatly transgresses the proper limits and is excessively proud and rebellious; (3) serpent (Aqrab); (4) any blamable power or faculty or propensity like anger, etc. (Mufradāt); (5) any painful condition like excessive thirst, etc. (Lane). In its wider sense, the word has also come to be used about anything which is harmful and injurious and is likely to cause suffering.

مستهزئون (mocking) is derived from هزأ which again is derived from هزأ, both having the same meaning. هزأ به means, he laughed at, or mocked or scoffed at, or derided him; he made light of him. هزأ also means, he died suddenly; he put it (camel, etc.) in motion. هزأ and هزوا are infinitive nouns from هزأ and mean: (1) mocking or scoffing or jesting, etc.; (2) object of mocking, etc. (Aqrab & Kashshāf).

16. <sup>a</sup>Allāh will punish their mockery and will <sup>b</sup>let them continue in their transgression, wandering blindly.<sup>22</sup>

اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>9:79; 11:9; 21:42. <sup>b</sup>6:111; 7:187; 10:12.

### Commentary:

The context of the verse makes it clear that by شياطين here is meant not evil spirits but rebellious ringleaders among the disbelievers and the hypocrites who were proud and haughty and ready to transgress all limits. Reference to such leaders has been made in 33:68 where God says, *And they (the people of Hell) will say, 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones and they led us astray from the way.'* These were the men who egged on the hypocrites to mischief and who were ever burning with jealousy and hate at seeing the Muslims prosper and who had gone far astray from truth.

Some Christian writers have rendered the word شياطين in this verse as "satans" or "devils", and then charged the Quran with reviling idolaters, Jews and Christians. The charge is groundless; for, as already explained, the word شياطين does not here mean "satans" but simply proud and mischievous ringleaders. In fact, as shown above, the word شيطان has a very wide significance in Arabic. The Holy Prophet once said to his Companions, "A single rider is a *shaiṭān*, a pair of riders also is a pair of *shaiṭāns*, but three riders are a body of riders" (Dāwūd). The meaning here is that one rider is exposed to mischief and danger and

so are two riders, but three riders travelling together form a safe company. Christian critics, ever keen on finding fault with the Quran, forget the New Testament passages (Mark 8:33; 8:38 & Matt. 3:7; 23:33) where Jesus calls a disciple satan and his opponents serpents and a generation of vipers, etc.

This meaning of the word شياطين i.e. ringleaders from among disbelievers and hypocrites, is supported by eminent Muslim scholars like Ibn 'Abbās, Qatādah, Mujāhid, and 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd (Jarīr).

### 22. Important Words:

يَسْتَهْزِئُ (will punish mockery). See 2:15 and also commentary below.

يَمُدُّهُمْ (He will let them continue) is derived from مَدَّ. They say مَدَّه meaning, he let him continue in a course, or he granted him a delay or respite. Literally مَدَّ means, he spread, or he stretched, or he made a thing extend (Aqrab).

طُغْيَانٍ (transgression) is derived from طَغَى which means, he exceeded the proper limits. طَغَى فلان means, he was excessive in sin and transgression. طَغَى الماء means, the water was in flood (Aqrab).

يَعْمَهُونَ (wandering blindly) is derived from عَمِيَ which means, he was or became confounded or perplexed and was unable to see his way, and went to and fro in confusion (Aqrab). عَمِيَ is

17. These are they who "have taken error in exchange for guidance; but their traffic has brought them no gain, nor are they rightly guided."<sup>23</sup>

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ  
فَمَا رَبِحَتْ تِجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا  
مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

"2:87, 176; 3:178; 14:4; 16:108.

like عَمِيَ; but whereas عَمِيَ is wider in its significance, being used for blindness both physical and mental, عَمَهُ is confined to mental blindness only (Kashshāf). عَمَهُ also means, it (the place) lost all marks or signs helpful for identification or for finding a way through it (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

In this verse the word يَسْتَهْزِئُ (lit. will mock) has been used for God, and this has occasioned the criticism that the God of the Quran is given to mocking. The criticism is due to the utter ignorance of Arabic idiom and usage. In Arabic, punishment for an evil is sometimes denoted by the term used for the evil itself. For instance, in 42:41 we read *جزاء سيئة سيئة مثلها* i.e. *the penalty for an evil is an evil the like thereof*, whereas the penalty of an evil is not an evil. Again in 2:195 the word اعتداء (transgression) is used for the punishment of transgression. Similarly, the well-known pre-Islamic Christian poet, 'Amr bin Kulthūm says:

اللاجئين احد علينا فنجعل فوق جهل الجاهلينا

"Beware! Nobody should employ ignorance against us; or we will show greater ignorance in return;" i.e. we will severely avenge such ignorance (Mu'allaqāt).

Thus the expression *الله يستهزئ بهم* does not mean, Allah shall mock at them,

but that Allah will punish them for their mocking. The former meaning, followed by some translators, is absolutely inconsistent with the spirit of the Quran which condemns jest and ridicule as marks of ignorance (2:68). How, then, can God attribute to Himself what He declares to be a practice of the ignorant?

The clause, *Allah will let them continue in their transgression*, should not be understood to mean that God grants the hypocrites respite to let them increase in transgression. Such a meaning is contradicted by verses 6:111 and 35:38, where it is clearly stated that God grants the disbelievers respite with the sole object of reforming them but they unfortunately only increase in transgression.

The word *يعمّهون* (wandering blindly) is derived from the root *عمه* which, as explained above, signifies, besides other meanings, the absence of signs or marks; The meaning here would, therefore, be that the hypocrites persist in their wickedness without care or consideration, as if the way they are travelling has lost all signs, leaving the traveller without any sense of distance or direction.

### 23. Important Words:

*اشترؤا* (have taken in exchange) is

18. Their case is like the case of a person who kindled a fire, and when it lighted up all around him, Allah took away their light

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ

derived from اشترى which again is derived from شرى both having the same meaning, i.e. he purchased a thing or became owner of a thing by purchase. The word also sometimes gives the meaning of باع i.e. he sold a thing. The word اشترى is also used of a person who gives up one thing and lays hold on another (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The expression, *who have taken error in exchange for guidance*, means (1) that they have given up guidance and taken error instead; or (2) that both guidance and error were offered to them but they preferred error and refused guidance. Both these meanings apply here. According to the first, the verse would mean that originally everybody is endowed with a pure nature and the best of capacities (30:31; 95:5), but, owing to wrong training or wrongdoing, the original nature and capacities become lost. In this case "guidance" would mean the nature or capacities with which every man is endowed by God, and "exchange" would mean that, through improper use, people lose the God-given guidance, landing themselves in error instead. According to the second meaning, the verse would signify that through His Messengers, God communicates to man only truth and guidance, whereas Satan presents

to him his own evil teaching. Wrong choice by man results in his acceptance of error instead of guidance.

This traffic, however, brings the hypocrites no gain. They believe that by preferring the promptings of Satan to the guidance of God, they would reap a good profit in this life. But, says God, they will reap no such profit. On the contrary, they will be the losers and will suffer humiliation through their own wrong choice.

The words, *nor are they rightly guided*, point to yet another consequence of the wrong choice of hypocrites. They will not only suffer loss and humiliation in this life, but will also suffer punishment in the life to come, for being deprived of guidance they will not reach the goal. Thus the words, *their traffic has brought them no gain*, refer to the benefits that accrue to one in this life, and the words, *nor are they rightly guided*, refer to the end they will meet in the life to come.

The verse teaches an important truth. Every action of man is attended by two kinds of results, one immediate and the other deferred. A person who is detected in theft suffers punishment and humiliation in this life. This is the immediate consequence of his action. The deferred consequence is that, by the same action, he reduces his ability to find and accept the truth and

and "left them in thick darkness;  
they see not.<sup>24</sup>

وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>6:40, 123; 24:41.

guidance. Similarly, when a person does a good deed, the immediate result is that he is pleased with himself and rises in the estimation of others. The deferred consequence is that he increases his power of finding and accepting truth and guidance. It is the deferred consequences that are referred to in the expression, *nor are they rightly guided*.

#### 24. Important Words:

مثال (case) gives a number of meanings: (1) likeness or similitude; (2) state or condition; (3) reason or argument; (4) proverb, etc (Aqrab)..

اضاء (it lighted up) is derived from ضاء i.e. it or he became bright or lit up. اضاء is used both transitively and intransitively. Used transitively it means, it lit up or lighted up (the surroundings, etc.), and used intransitively it means, it became bright or lit up. الضياء or الضوء means, light (Aqrab). In the verse under comment the word has been used transitively.

ظلمات (darkness or lit. darknesses), which is the plural of ظلمة i.e. darkness or absence of light, is derived from ظلم i.e. it became dark. The word ظلمة is also used figuratively to signify ضلالة i.e. error or ignorance, just as the word نور i.e. light is sometimes used to signify هداية i.e. guidance (Aqrab). ظلمة also means, affliction, hardship and danger. In the verse the word ظلمات has been used in the plural form in

order to signify that the position or place spoken of is not only wanting in light, but is also full of various dangers. In the Quran the word is always used in the plural and denotes different kinds of darkness, physical, moral or spiritual. In the moral and spiritual sense the plural form also signifies that sins and evil deeds do not stand alone, but grow and multiply, one stumbling leading to another.

#### Commentary:

The verse speaks of hypocrites who were unbelievers at heart but outwardly formed part of the Muslim community. The light of the Holy Prophet or the light of Islam touched their outside, but owing to the diseased condition of their hearts it could not penetrate their inside, which is essential for true religious conversion; so they remained virtually deprived of that light. "The kindler of fire" in the verse can mean either: (1) the class of hypocrites who kindled a fire for themselves, i.e. they accepted the light of Islam but when the light grew in intensity and lit up the surroundings, their hidden disease got the better of them and they lost the light and were left in utter darkness. In this case the Arabic text would read somewhat like this: مثلهم i.e. كمثل الذين استوقدوا نارا فلما اضاءت ما حولهم - الخ their condition is like the condition of those who kindle a fire, etc. This reading would be quite correct

according to Arabic idiom and the style of the Quran itself. Or, (2) it may mean the Holy Prophet of Islam who, under God's command, kindled a fire or a light but then the class of hypocrites came into being, whom the light touched but did not penetrate. Though apparently in light, they were really deprived of it, and owing to the disease of their heart their deprivation grew as the light increased. In this case the Arabic text would read somewhat like this: **مثله** كمثل بعض اصحاب الذي استوقد ناراً فلما اضاءت ما حوله **ال** i.e. their condition is like the condition of some of those surrounding a person who kindles a fire, etc. This reading is also correct according to the Arabic idiom. In either case the people deprived of light are the hypocrites.

By 'a fire' is meant, the light of divine teaching and heavenly signs. This is corroborated by other passages in the Quran. In 28:30, 31, it is said that Moses saw a fire near Mount Sinai and, approaching it, he heard a voice, saying, *O Moses, verily I, even I, am Allah, the Lord of the worlds*. Elsewhere in the Quran divine revelation is compared to "fire" and it is stated that some human beings possessing extraordinary spiritual potency are near to being lit up even without divine revelation (24:36). Thus, according to the Quran, the word "fire" sometimes signifies the light of divine teaching and heavenly signs, and in the present verse the word has been used in this very sense.

According to Arab usage, the word "fire" is sometimes also used for war.

In 5:65 the Jews are said to have lighted the fire of war. In this sense, the verse would mean that hypocrites conspired with disbelievers to wage war against Islam. But the war only served to increase the power of Islam, leaving the hypocrites utterly confounded.

The words, *Allah took away their light*, may mean that the wars tore away from the hypocrites the bright mantle of Islam with which they had disguised themselves. The wars not only failed to bring the expected victory to the disbelievers, but also helped to expose the hypocrites who betrayed themselves by failing to join up with the Muslims and share the perils of the wars with them. The gradual extension and elaboration of the teachings of Islam also helped the exposure. The more commands there were to obey, the more burdensome did obedience prove to the hypocrites.

The expression, *left them in thick darkness; they see not*, means that the hypocrites had fomented the wars in order to re-establish their influence but the actual result of these wars was the exposure of their hypocrisy and their consequent confusion and perplexity.

If the word "fire" means the light of Islam, the verse would signify that though the light of Islam touched the hypocrites on the outside, yet their hearts remained unaffected by it. God deprived them not only of the light of revelation with all its blessings but also of the light of conscience which He has implanted in the nature of man.

19. They are <sup>a</sup>deaf, dumb and blind; so they will not return.<sup>25</sup>

صُمُّكُمْ عَمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ<sup>٢٥</sup>

20. Or it is like a heavy rain from the clouds, <sup>b</sup>wherein is thick darkness and thunder and <sup>c</sup>lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ  
وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَّجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي  
أُذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ<sup>ط</sup>

<sup>a</sup>2:172; 6:40; 7:180; 8:23; 10:43; 11:25; 17:98; 21:46; 27:81; 30:53, 54; 43:41. <sup>b</sup>6:40, 123; 24:41.

<sup>c</sup>13:13; 24:44; 30:25.

## 25. Important Words:

صم (deaf persons) which is the plural of اصم (a deaf man) is derived from صم. They say صم القارورة i.e. he put a stopper into the mouth of the bottle. صم means, his ear became closed up, or he became deaf, or he had a heaviness of hearing. اصم means, one who has a stoppage of the ear and heaviness of hearing. رجل اصم also means, a man whom one does not hope to win over and who will not be turned back from the object of his desire. The word also signifies one who persists in his evil course (Aqrab).

بكم (dumb persons) which is the plural of اكم (a dumb man) is derived from بكم (bakima), i.e. he became dumb. بكم (bakuma) means, he kept silent intentionally. اكم means, one who is dumb either by natural conformation or from inability to express himself; or, one not having ability to find words, though possessing the faculty of speech (Tāj).

عمى (blind persons) which is the plural of اعمى (a blind person) is derived from عمى i.e. he became totally blind. اعمى means, one physically blind of both eyes; or one blind in respect of mental vision (Aqrab). See also 2:16.

## Commentary:

The verse aptly describes the mental condition of the class of hypocrites mentioned in the previous verse. The first cause of their going astray was that they had turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of the Prophet. Secondly, they did not give straightforward expression to their doubts to have them dispelled. Exaggerated pride and self-esteem prevented them from asking questions. Lastly, they had become insensitive to the progress Islam was making and the change it had effected in its followers. As they made no use of their ears, their tongues and their eyes, they are spoken of as deaf, dumb and blind.

The words, *they will not return*, point to an important truth. Man is born with a pure nature—the nature of Islam—and it is only by his evil deeds that he corrupts himself. So the words, *they will not return*, allude to the fact that these men have strayed away from their original good nature, and though God is calling them back to the pristine purity of their nature, they will not return.

thunderclaps for fear of death, and Allah encompasses the disbelievers.<sup>26</sup>

وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

## 26. Important Words:

أو (or) is a conjunction signifying several meanings. Here it is used in the sense of "or". It does not, however, denote doubt but simply indicates the presentation of an alternative similitude.

صيب (heavy rain) is derived from صاب which means, it came down; it descended; or it poured forth. The word صيب means, clouds pouring down heavy rain; or heavy rain itself (Lane).

سما (the clouds) is derived from سما i.e. he or it became high or towering. Thus السماء means, anything that hangs high over your head and covers you in its shade; the sky; any canopy, ceiling or roof; a cloud (Aqrab).

رعد (thunder). رعد السحاب means, the cloud thundered. رعد لي فلان means, he threatened me. رعد therefore means, thunder of clouds; or thunder of war, etc. In the present verse it is used figuratively, meaning, weighty commands; or prophecies relating to coming disasters; or injunctions relating to war, etc.

برق (lightning) is derived from برق i.e. it shone or gave out light. برق السماء means, the sky shone with lightning. برق الشيء means, the thing shone with light. البرق therefore means, lightning or gleaming in the clouds (Aqrab). In this verse it is used figuratively, meaning, victories in wars; or spoils of war; or clear signs of truth, etc.

الصواعق (thunderclaps) is the plural of

الصاعقة (a thunderclap) which is derived from صعن (ṣa'iqā) or صعن (ṣa'aqā). They say صعقت السماء القوم i.e. the sky hit the people with lightning. صعن الرعد means, the thunder grew louder. صعن الرجل means, the man fell down in a swoon; he died; he lost the power of thinking owing to some great and sudden noise accompanying a calamity. الصاعقة means: (1) lightning that descends from the thundering clouds and burns what it smites; (2) any destructive calamity or punishment; (3) death and destruction; (4) noise or report accompanying a divine punishment like an earthquake, etc.; (5) swoon and unconsciousness (Aqrab & Lane).

الموت (death) is from مات i.e. he died (in various senses); he became as if dead; he slept. موت is the opposite of حياة (life) and means death or lifelessness. Like life, death is also of several kinds: (1) Stoppage of the power of growth (50:12). (2) Deprivation of sensation or consciousness (19:24). (3) Deprivation of the faculty of intellect and understanding (6:123). (4) To be, as though, dead with grief or sorrow or fear (14:18). (5) Spiritual death (3:170). (6) Sleep, which the Arabs call a light sort of death (Mufradāt). (7) Stillness or motionlessness. (8) Being reduced to poverty. (9) Becoming worn out. (10) Becoming base, abject, vile and despicable. (11) Becoming destitute of cultivation or of inhabitants



(Lane). According to Lisān موت (death) also signifies any painful condition such as poverty, humiliation, dotage, sinfulness, etc.

### Commentary:

This verse refers to the second class of hypocrites, viz. those who, though not quite insincere in their belief, were yet weak in their faith and practice and became upset whenever there was a threat of attack by the enemy or whenever a situation arose demanding some sacrifice. These people feared the oppression of men more than the punishment of God, and tried to maintain good relations with disbelievers by secret correspondence and by supplying information about the believers. They consoled themselves with the thought that as Islam was a true religion from God, its victory was assured in spite of anything they might do, and hence it was not proper for them to expose themselves to unnecessary danger.

Islam has no place for such weaklings. It is a religion of action and sacrifice. That is why, in the very beginning of the Quran, such people have been plainly told that God reckons them among the hypocrites and will deal with them accordingly. Islam teaches us not to spare any sacrifice to win the pleasure of God and one who is not prepared for such a complete sacrifice will not deserve the reward promised to Islam and Muslims.

This and the preceding verses refer to two classes of hypocrites: (1) disbelievers who posed as Muslims, and (2) believers bad in faith and worse in works—with

leanings towards disbelievers. This is proved by the following considerations: (a) In verse 18 it is said that the hypocrites kindled a fire, but in the present verse there is no mention of the hypocrites kindling a fire. On the contrary, mention is made of signs or trials coming from heaven; (b) In the first simile it was said that when the fire illuminated its surroundings, the hypocrites were bereft of their sight. In the second simile embodied in vv. 20 & 21 it is said that when there is light, the people take advantage of it and begin to move; (c) In the first simile it was said that the people referred to were not believers. They were deaf, dumb and blind. But in the second simile it is only said that if God willed He would make these people deaf and blind, implying that they were not so already but would become so, if they continued to pursue the course they had adopted; and (d) The men in the first simile were said to be plotting against Islam and Muslims, whereas those in the second simile are not spoken of as plotting against Muslims, but simply as leaving them alone in times of danger. All these facts indicate that these verses refer to two separate classes of hypocrites and this is why the word **او** (or) has been placed between the two verses. They are two separate classes and not the same class.

The purport of the present verse is that the condition of the latter class of hypocrites is like that of those timorous people who, at a mere shower of rain with thunder and lightning, become timid and fail to

21. The lightning might well-nigh snatch away their sight; whenever it shines upon them, they walk therein; and <sup>a</sup>when it becomes dark to them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight; surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.<sup>27</sup>

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢١﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:73, 74.

benefit from the rain. Similarly, the coming of Islam is accompanied by trials and hardships. The true believer knows that these too have a purpose and is not upset. The trials serve only to increase his zeal.

Objection is sometimes taken against Prophets on the ground that their advent produces disorder and disunion in the earth. The verse provides an answer to this objection by pointing out that just as rain, which gives life to the earth, is accompanied by darkness and thunder and a temporary screening of the sun, even so the trials which accompany the advent of Prophets only presage the dawning of a new era in even greater splendour and effulgence.

The word صاعقة (thunderclap) is spoken of in the verse as making the hypocrites fearful of death. The verse suggests that such a fear is unreasonable because the thunderclap which makes these people afraid comes after the lightning has actually struck. To slip one's fingers into one's

ears can therefore serve no purpose. A state of war already exists between believers and disbelievers and this must entail some suffering and hardship. It is of no use to the hypocrites to try to escape the implications and consequences of war.

The words, *Allah encompasses the disbelievers*, at the end of the verse point to the unreasonableness of the fear entertained by the hypocrites. Since God has already decreed the defeat and destruction of the disbelievers, the hypocrites need have no fear of any serious harm from them.

## 27. Important Words:

يَخْطَفُ (snatch away) is derived from خطف meaning, he seized a thing quickly; he snatched it away خطف البرق means, the lightning snatched away the sight (Aqrah).

شَيْءٌ (thing or what one wills) is infinitive from شاء i.e. he willed or he intended. The word شيء is ordinarily translated as, a thing or anything or something; but as in Arabic the infinitive is sometimes used to give

the meaning of a passive participle, the word may also be translated as, what is willed or intended or something that one wills or intends.

قَدِير (has the power) is derived from قَدَرَ. They say قَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ i.e. he had the power to do it; or he possessed power over him or it. قَادِر means, powerful, possessing power over, or possessing power to do. قَدِير is the intensive form of قَادِر and means, very powerful, most powerful, having or possessing full power.

### Commentary:

The verse purports to say that these hypocrites—the hypocrites described as weak believers—are very near to losing their sight. They have not actually lost it, but if they are repeatedly confronted with situations demanding courage and sacrifice symbolized by lightning and thunder, they are very likely to lose their faith. But the mercy of God has so ordained that lightning is not always accompanied by a thunder-bolt. Often it is only a brilliant flash, which lifts the veil of darkness and helps the wayfarer to move on. In this case it symbolizes the dazzling power of Islam. On such occasions these hypocrites make common cause with the Muslims. But when lightning is accompanied by thunder, i.e. when the situation demands sacrifice of life or property, the world becomes dark to the hypocrites; they become dumb-founded and stand still, refusing to move on with the faithful.

The words, *and if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight*, indicate that the

hypocrites referred to here had not been deprived of their hearing or sight till then. It was still open to them to submit to the teaching of the Quran completely and to accept the leadership of the Prophet in all sincerity. If, however, they continued in their present course and did not stop deserting the Muslims in difficult times, they would soon cease to have any connection with Islam and the Muslims—they would lose all sight and all hearing.

The words, *surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, imply that the fear of the hypocrites lest they should come to harm at the hands of disbelievers has its origin in their want of faith in God and of a knowledge of His attributes. If they only knew that Allah had the power to do all that He willed and that He had decreed that Islam should triumph over all its enemies, they would not fear the disbelievers at all. Fear other than the fear of God is always due to a weakness of faith in God, and a lack of true knowledge of His attributes.

The statement that, *Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, also disposes of the question, sometimes very naively asked, whether God has the power to cause His own death or make an equal to Himself or to speak a lie, etc. As explained above, the word شَيْء means, something that is willed or intended, and as God never wills to cause His own death or to make an equal to Himself or to speak a lie, etc.—because these are signs of imperfection and God is perfect—so these and all similar questions, beside

**R. 3.**

22. O ye men, "worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you, that you may become righteous;<sup>28</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ  
وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:2, 37; 5:73, 118; 16:37; 22:78; 51:57.

being foolish, are irrelevant and must not arise.

Lastly, it may be noted that this verse also serves as a warning to Muslims. One may be careful against drifting into a state of كفر (disbelief) or becoming a منافق (hypocrite) of the first class, but one may imperceptibly turn into a hypocrite of the second class without feeling the change in the beginning. A true Muslim should, therefore, be ever on his guard against that danger. He should not only hold the beliefs taught by Islam but should also act like a true Muslim and be ever prepared for all sacrifices in the cause of Islam.

**28. Important Words:**

رب (Lord). For the meaning of this word see note on 1:2. In the present verse God Himself explains the meaning of the word رب by saying ربكم الذي خلقكم i.e. your *Rabb* is He Who has created you. This meaning, though absolutely correct, is not found in the ordinary lexicons, which interpret it simply as Lord and Sustainer. The full meaning of the word thus turns out to be "Lord, Creator and Sustainer".

لعل (so that) is generally used to denote expectation, or doubt combined with expectation. That is why Christian translators have generally

rendered it as, haply or peradventure or perhaps. But this rendering is clearly wrong in the present context; for, as explained by Lane, the word when used by God generally signifies not doubt but certainty. In fact, God's announcements are in the nature of royal proclamations in which such words are used not to express doubt resulting from ignorance but to express hope born of certainty. The word has therefore been rightly rendered here as, that or so that. Sometimes it may be rendered as, may be.

**Commentary:**

As we have seen, the Quran began with the claim that the best Book of guidance can only come from a Being Who is All-Knowing and that such a being is Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the world, Who has sent down the Quran for the guidance and perfection of mankind. This Book is (1) a perfect treasure-house of all that is good and valuable, (2) is free from all defects, and (3) does not stop short at any stage of spiritual progress but carries men and women of all grades of righteousness to higher and still higher stages, and so on to unlimited progress. Having made this claim, the Quran proceeds to give a brief description of the three classes: believers, disbelievers and hypocrites.

Attention is then drawn to the fact that as the Quran enables the righteous to make greater and greater spiritual progress, everybody should try to become one of the righteous and earn the spiritual benefits of the Quran. Says the Quran: *O ye men! worship your Lord* (i.e. enter into His service)...*that you may become righteous.*

Worship demands complete subjection, and the sense of subjection is generated in its perfection only when one and one's forefathers are all under obligation. History tells us that lives have been sacrificed for the sake of cruel kings simply because the ancestors of those kings had done some good to the ancestors of the people making the sacrifice. The feeling of obligation becomes stronger as generation after generation is laid under obligation. Therefore, it is a perfectly natural appeal which is made in the verse in the words: *O ye men, worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you.*

The verse then proceeds to make it clear that the object of worship is not merely recognising and acknowledging God. If it were so, the worship of idols, however unjust, would not be so injurious. God is worshipped for the sake of attaining righteousness and spiritual perfection. How can false gods make man perfect spiritually, when they have not created him and have no knowledge of his powers or limitations?

The words *لعلكم تتقون* (*that you may become righteous*) clearly point out

that the command to worship is not for the benefit of God. It is for the benefit of man himself. Those who regard the Law as a curse look upon it only as a mere show of authority on the part of God. But the Quran clearly states that God's commands are for the guidance of man. They help to nurture all his latent powers. Such a teaching cannot be a curse. He who warns a blind person of a pit lying in front of him does not curse him. A doctor who prescribes for a suffering patient does no wrong to him.

There is another point to be remembered. The word *رب* means, He Who creates and then develops by degrees. At the birth of man, the foundation is laid for his perfect future development. If worship, on his part, does not lead to the perfection of his latent powers, it is no worship at all. It is a mere facade or a lifeless form.

The clause *لعلكم تتقون* (*that you may become righteous*) teaches us to avoid not only those things which impair man's relation with God but also those which impair the relation between man and man. He who regards God as his Creator and Sustainer will look to Him for his needs and will not cast greedy looks at the wealth of others. He can never be untrue to his fellow men, and will remain always at peace with them. The Companions of the Holy Prophet lived for God and looked up only to Him. The peace which the world witnessed in their time remains unparalleled. Indeed there can be no peace, unless we are devoted to God. If Europe had been so devoted, she would not have been

23. Who <sup>a</sup>made the earth a bed for you, and <sup>b</sup>the heaven a roof, and caused water to come down from the clouds and therewith brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Set not up, therefore, equals to Allah, while you know.<sup>29</sup>

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً ۖ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>20:54; 27:62; 43:11; 51:49; 71:20; 78:7. <sup>b</sup>51:48; 78:13; 79:28, 29.

suffering from the mortal disease now eating into her vitals—the hunger for land and wealth.

This verse contains the first command of God given in the Quran. As the words, *O ye men*, indicate, this command to worship God is addressed to all mankind and not to Arabs only, which shows that Islam, from the very beginning, claimed to be universal. It abolished the idea of national religion and conceived mankind as one brotherhood.

The question "Who is to be worshipped" is answered by the word *رب* (Creator) in order to disavow false gods who have created nothing and are themselves created.

Men are actuated either by love or fear. In this verse appeal is made to both motives. Love either springs from *حسن* i.e. beauty of the beloved, or from a feeling of *احسان* i.e. favour received from same one. God is beauty and the source of all beauty. One aspect of His beauty is that He creates man in a very low condition and then by degrees develops and raises him to the highest mark of perfection. The feeling of obligation is appealed to by saying "Your Lord

is He Who created you and your fathers".

It is curious that when Jesus was asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt. 22:36, 37). But this commandment which Jesus calls the great commandment in the Law is not presented in the beginning of the New Testament. It comes much later and then only when people asked Jesus about it, although as regards importance it should have been given the first place. In the Old Testament also this commandment occurs in later chapters. So is the case with other Scriptures. None gives it the first place. Only the Quran does so.

## 29. Important Words:

*فرش* (a bed) is derived from *فرش*. They say *فرش الشيء* i.e. he spread out the thing; he expanded it. *فرش* means, a thing that is spread upon the ground: a thing that is spread for one to sit or lie upon: a bed on which one sleeps; a wide or spacious plain or tract of land (Lane).

بناء (a roof) is derived from بنى meaning, he built; he constructed. So بناء means, a building; a structure; a thing that is built or constructed; also the roof or ceiling of a house or of a chamber or the like (Lane).

ثمرات (fruits) is the plural of ثمرة meaning, a fruit. The word is derived from the verb ثمر which means, the fruit became ripe. اثمر means, the tree, etc. produced fruit. The word ثمرة is also used figuratively, meaning, son or offspring; or profit of a thing (Tāj).

انداد (equals) is the plural of د which means, the like of a person or thing; or the like of a thing by participation of substance. It is a more specialised term than مثل which signifies alike by participation of anything. The word د also means, a thing which does or may supply the place of another thing; or a like that is contrary or opposed to another thing; a thing taken as an object of worship instead of the true God (Lane). د is to be distinguished from شريك; whereas د is the like of a thing, being contrary or opposed to it, شريك is simply a participant that shares the attributes or work of a thing (Aqrab under شريك and د)

### Commentary:

The subject matter of the last verse has been completed in this. It was said in that verse that هب should be worshipped because He is the Creator and He alone can foster man's powers. In the present verse it is said that not only man but the heavens and the earth also have been created by God. It is evident that human actions depend upon environment. Trade, agriculture, industry, travel, etc. are

made possible ultimately by the nature and influence of the heavens and the earth. So human actions can be guided aright only by a Being Who has made the heavens and the earth. It is only He Who can harness them for the use of man. None else has such knowledge, power or authority. So man should worship God alone.

The expression, *and Who made the heaven a roof*, suggests that just as a building or a roof is a source of protection for those living in or under it, similarly the remoter parts of the universe are a protection for our planet; and those who have studied the science of the stars, the clouds and other atmospheric phenomena know how the other heavenly bodies, running their courses through the boundless expanse rising high above the earth on all sides, make for its safety and stability.

In the clause, *caused water to come down from the clouds*, the word سماء has been used in the sense of "cloud", whereas in the preceding clause, *and Who made the heaven a roof*, it signifies "heaven". Had it meant the same thing in the two places, it would have been replaced in the second place by a pronoun. The repetition of the word is intended to convey a difference of meaning in the second place.

After making it clear that everything in this world is the creation of God, attention is drawn to the fact that God has no equal. There is nothing in the whole universe which can show any part of it to have

been created by anyone other than God. Why, then, should man worship anyone else?

In this verse it is also hinted that the perfection of the material world depends upon a co-ordination of earthly and heavenly forces. When water is made corrupt by men on earth, fresh and pure water is supplied from heaven. Breathing makes the air foul but it is purified by nature. The eye is useful, but of what avail is it without the rays of the sun? In short, if the earth is a bed for man, the heaven is a roof. So is the case with the spiritual world. Man is gifted with reason but, like the eye, reason cannot function properly without the help of divine revelation. Human instincts are pure but they become polluted by greed, malice, etc. They can only be cleansed by the water of revelation. Hence man cannot attain to spiritual success without attaching himself to God. By showing material life to be dependent upon both earth and heaven, God points to a parallel in the spiritual world, and teaches that in spiritual matters also man should not trust earthly means alone. The intellect is not enough. Like the material world, the spiritual world also requires heavenly help. Just as there is a heaven above the earth, there is a heaven above the heart and brain of man. This is God's guidance received through revelation.

An interesting question arises here. According to a widespread modern belief, the idea of God has evolved out of a primitive belief in spirits, ghosts and fairies. It is also said that in primitive times man worshipped

beasts and poisonous insects and then gradually advanced to the idea of God. Modern critics appear to be in agreement that the idea of many gods has always preceded the idea of one God. The history of man's beliefs is cited as evidence.

Some of those who hold such a view seem anxious to reconcile it with religion. They claim that their view does not go against religion. They say that God revealed the laws of nature by degrees; therefore there is nothing surprising if He should have revealed Himself also by degrees. Now, all religions base themselves upon revelation. And if the basis of religion is revelation, then the belief—that God revealed Himself by degrees and that He first guided the world to other gods, and then to Himself—at once falls to the ground. It is against all reason that God should first guide man to spirits, stones, rivers and snakes and then reveal Himself. What was there to hinder Him from guiding man to Himself from the very beginning? The living religions of the world have ever believed in revelation. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam, all teach that revelation began with the creation of man. This being the case, there can have been no gradual evolution of the idea of God. Evolutionary accounts, therefore, conflict with religion. Those who hold them must deny revelation, the basis of religion.

The denial of revelation is, of course, very common in the Christian West. Christendom has failed for a



24. And if you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then <sup>a</sup>produce a Chapter like it, and call upon your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful.<sup>30</sup>

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا  
فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا  
شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ  
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>10:39; 11:14; 17:89; 52:35.

long time to provide any examples of persons with revelation experience. Little wonder that those speculators, who have had no such experience themselves and who have not been made aware of such experience in others, should deny revelation outright. According to the Quran, however, God has spoken to man in all ages. The Quran itself is a record of revelation and, according to the Quran, the followers of Islam must continue to receive revelation. The recipient in our age is the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Nobody who knows all this can be impressed by denials of revelation. He can only treat them as mere ignorant conjectures.

Evolutionary accounts have little foundation in fact. It is said that the idea of God found amongst uncivilised peoples of the world today is polytheistic, therefore the idea of one God must have originated in polytheism. But it is not realized that the uncivilized peoples of today are not samples of the earliest human beings. Civilization has known many ages. Greece, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, India and China were centres of civilization and culture in their own days, but now they seem engulfed in darkness and ignorance. If ignorance can grow

out of civilization, why not polytheism out of monotheism? In India, Krishna preached the doctrine of the Unity of God, but after his time a wave of idolatry swept over the country; and when Muslims came here, they found idol-worship rampant throughout the land. In Judaism false gods have taken the place of Jehovah. Jesus preached a simple faith in One God, but Christendom now believes in Trinity. A lower conception can easily supplant a higher one. Islam is an historical religion. Even its enemies admit that it teaches belief in the pure Unity of God. But today even Muslims have degenerated to the worship of things other than God. These examples refute the doctrine that monotheism has necessarily grown out of polytheism.

Moreover, a study of primitive religion itself shows that among the primitive people the idea of a perfect Deity exists side by side with their worship of many deities. Only, God is known by different names among different peoples. There also exists among the primitives the idea of revelation; they hold it to be the medium through which they came to have a knowledge of God.

### 30. Important Words:

عبد (servant). For the root meaning

of the word see note under 1:5. As explained there, the verb عبد means, he showed complete submissiveness and humility; or he received the imprint of a thing. So عبد would mean a person who, through complete submission and humility to God, has become, as it were, an image of God. The word has been used here about the Holy Prophet by way of endearment and is expressive of the exalted position he holds in the sight of God.

شهداء (helpers) is the plural of شهيد which is derived from شهد i.e. he was present; or he gave witness, etc. Thus شهيد means, one who is present; one who sees or witnesses; one who gives testimony or evidence; one who possesses much knowledge; one from whose knowledge nothing is hidden (Aqrab & Lane); also a helper (Mufradât). Following the last mentioned signification the word may also refer here to the Jews who were friends of the disbelievers (5:81) and spoke of the idolaters as being *better guided in religion than those who believe* (4:52).

### Commentary:

In the preceding two verses the Quran gave its first commandment to the people. Having been thus directly addressed by God, the polytheistic disbelievers felt a natural reaction to repudiate the monotheistic teaching of the Quran, because they felt that its acceptance meant that they should give up their long cherished beliefs.

In the present verse God says that if the Quran created doubts and disquietude in their minds and is not

worthy of acceptance, the disbelievers should produce one like it. If they cannot, then this very fact would prove them to be wrong.

The subject of the incomparable excellence of the Quran, has been dealt with at five different places in the Quran, i.e. in 2:24; 10:39; 11:14; 17:89; & 52:34, 35, and disbelievers have been challenged, to produce its equal.

In two of these five verses (2:24 & 10:39) the challenge is identical, while in the remaining three verses three separate and different demands have been made from disbelievers. Thus, to begin with the largest demand in 17:89, disbelievers are challenged to produce the like of the whole Quran, and they have been told that even if all jinn and men should join together, they would not be able to produce it. In 11:14 the challenge is limited to the production of ten chapters. In 2:24 and 10:39, however, it has been confined to one *Sûrah* only; while in 52:34-35, the condition of even one *Sûrah* has been omitted and disbelievers have been given the option of producing even a single narration similar to any one narration (i.e. announcement) of the Quran. On the face of it, this difference in the form of the challenge at different places seems to be incongruent and to spring from a lack of harmony in the Quran. Some commentators have endeavoured to explain away this seeming incongruity by saying that it was due to the challenge having been made at different times. At first disbelievers were called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran.

When they failed to do so, the challenge was whittled down to the production of the like of any ten chapters. When, however, they were unable to produce even ten chapters, the challenge was further reduced to the production of a single chapter; and, lastly, disbelievers were asked to produce even a single narration like any narration of the Quran. This explanation, however, does not seem to be satisfactory. The different *Sūrah*s containing these different challenges were revealed, in the following order: (1) 52:34, 35; (2) 17:89; (3) 11:14; (4) 10:39; (5) 2:24 (Rodwell). Now in *Sūrah* 52, the first to be revealed, the challenge is not qualified by any condition as regards size, disbelievers having been given the choice of producing even one single narration similar to any narration of the Quran. It is very strange that, whereas at first the challenge was unqualified and disbelievers were called upon to produce something comparable to any narration of the Quran, later it began to be hedged round by conditions and stipulations, first requiring disbelievers to produce the like of the whole book, then reducing the challenge to ten *Sūrah*s, and last of all reducing it to a single chapter. The order is most unnatural.

Moreover, some of the *Sūrah*s which contain this challenge were revealed on occasions so close to one another that some commentators have found it difficult to fix their order of priority with certainty. Hence it is unwise to settle this question on the basis of the chronological order of the *Sūrah*s containing this challenge.

Another point worth considering in this connection is that the verses in question do not mention any historical event but contain only a general challenge which stands for all time. Now the question is, in what form should the challenge be delivered to the world? Should disbelievers be called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran, or to produce ten *Sūrah*s like any ten *Sūrah*s of the Quran, or should they be called upon to bring forward the like of one *Sūrah* only or the like of any single piece of the Quran? If it is enough to make a demand for the like of a single piece of the Quran, why should a demand for the like of a *Sūrah* be made, and if it is enough to make a demand for the like of one *Sūrah*, the demand for the production of ten *Sūrah*s or, for that matter, for the whole of the Quran seems extravagant.

The fact is that these verses contain certain demands which stand for all time, and there is no need to enter into the question of their chronological order. The challenge can be made even today in all the different forms mentioned in the Quran as it was made at the time of the Holy Prophet.

Before explaining the various forms of these challenges it is worth noting that mention of them in the Quran is invariably accompanied by a reference to wealth and power, except in 2:24, which, as already stated, does not contain a new challenge but only repeats the challenge made in 10:39. From this it may be concluded that there exists a close connection

between the question of wealth and power and the challenge for the production of the like of the Quran or a part thereof. This connection lies in the fact that the Quran has been held out to disbelievers as a priceless treasure. When disbelievers demanded material treasures from the Holy Prophet and asked, *Wherefore has not a treasure been sent down to him* (11:13), they were told in reply that he possessed a matchless treasure in the Quran. The same reply was repeated when disbelievers asked, *Wherefore has not an angel come with him?* (11:13). They were told in reply that angels did descend upon him; for their function was to bring the word of God, and the Divine Word had already been vouchsafed to him. Thus both the demand for a treasure and the demand for the descent of angels have been jointly met by offering the Quran as a matchless treasure brought down by angels, and the challenge to produce the like of the Quran has been put forward as a proof of its peerless quality.

Let us now take the different verses containing this challenge separately. The greatest demand is that made in 17:89, where disbelievers are required to bring a book like the whole of the Quran in all its manifold qualities. In this verse disbelievers are not required to represent their composition as the word of God. They may bring it forward as their own composition and declare it to be the equal of or, for that matter, better than the Quran. As, however, it was necessary to define in what respect the work to be produced was to

resemble the Quran, the Quran says in the next verse, *And of a truth We have (herein) set forth for mankind in various ways, all kinds of similitudes, but most of men would reject everything but disbelief* (17:90), hinting thereby that if disbelievers reject the Divine origin of the Quran and believe it to be the work of the Prophet himself, then let them produce a book which, like the Quran, should possess the following excellences: (a) it should throw light on every essential subject pertaining to religion; (b) its discussion of these subjects should be exhaustive, offering detailed guidance on every question; (c) it should be free from all harm and contain nothing but good; and (d) it should aim not at the good of any particular people or community but at the well-being of all mankind, containing guidance for all temperaments and dispositions as well as for all circumstances and conditions. But as at the time when this challenge was made the whole of the Quran had not yet been revealed, disbelievers were not required to produce the like of the Quran there and then; and the challenge thus implied a prophecy that they would not be able to produce the like of it, neither in the form in which it then was nor when it became complete. Again, the challenge was not confined to the disbelievers of the Prophet's time alone, but extended to doubters and critics of all times.

The second verse which contains a challenge is 11:14. In this verse the disbelievers' objection that the Prophet had not come with a treasure, nor had an angel come to him, has

been met by calling upon them to bring similar *Sūrahs* which they should represent as the word of God. The latter demand, i.e. that pertaining to the representation of the required production as the word of God, has a reference to the objection of the disbelievers that no angel has come down to the Prophet. They are told that if no angel has really come to him and his claim to receive divine revelation through the medium of angels is false, then let them also produce ten *Sūrahs*, claiming, like him, that they have been brought down to them by angels, and then see what their end would be. If they had not the courage to forge a lie against God, how could they think that the Prophet could be guilty of such fabrication or, if he had dared to commit this forgery, why had he remained secure from God's punishment?

The reason why the disbelievers in this verse have been called upon to produce ten *Sūrahs* and not the whole Quran is that the question here did not relate to the perfection of the Quran in all respects, but to that of only a portion of it. The disbelievers had objected to some parts of it being defective, as is evident from the words: *They imagine that thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee* (11:13). Hence, they have not been required here to bring a complete book like the whole Quran, but only ten *Sūrahs* in place of those parts of the Quran which they deem to be defective, in order that the truth of their assertion may be tested.

As for the selection of the specific

number 10 for this purpose, it should be noted that in Arabic 10 represents a complete number. As the object was to refute the assertion of the disbelievers that certain portions of the Quran were defective, therefore the disbelievers were given the option of making as many as ten efforts to substantiate their claim. They were thus asked to produce ten *Sūrahs* not because they could produce less than that number but because the best way to refute their objection was to afford them several opportunities to substantiate the truth of their assertion. In short, since in 17:89 the whole Quran was claimed to be a perfect Book, its opponents were called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran; but since in 11:14 the point was that certain portions of it were objected to, so they were asked to choose ten such portions as appeared to them to be most defective and then, produce a composition even like those portions.

The third verse where the Quran has been declared to be matchless is 10:39. Here disbelievers have been called upon to produce the like of only one *Sūrah* of the Quran. This is so because, unlike the above-mentioned two verses, the challenge made in this verse is in support of a claim made by the Quran itself and not in refutation of any objection on the part of disbelievers. In the verses preceding 10:39, it was claimed that God possessed full authority over all things (see 10:32-36), and as a proof of this, in 10:38 the Quran was put forward as possessing the following excellences: (a) it contains teachings which could not be devised by man;

(b) it has come in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the previous Scriptures; (c) in it the imperfect teachings of the previous Scriptures have been perfected; (d) the word of God embodied in it has been made secure from being interpolated or tampered with by man; and (e) its teachings are meant for all men and all time. In support of this claim, verse 10:39 throws out a challenge to those who deny or doubt it to produce a single chapter containing these excellences in the same perfect form in which they are contained in this chapter, i.e. ch.10.

The verses 52:34, 35 contain the smallest of all demands. In these verses disbelievers are challenged to produce a single piece or a single announcement like any piece or announcement of the Quran. This demand also has been made in support of a claim made by the Quran itself and not in refutation of any objection on the part of disbelievers. Hence the smallness of the demand. The claim in question is made in the opening verses of chapter 52, i.e. *Sūrah At-Tūr*, to the effect that the Quranic revelation which was promised to mankind through Moses on Mount Sinai, will continue to be written, read and published throughout the world and that its followers will continue to multiply and will comprise not only common men but persons of great spiritual and temporal eminence, and that the fountain of the new faith will continue to provide the water of eternal life to all the countries of the world so that the fulfilment of these prophecies will constitute a proof of

the fact that there is a Day of Judgement. Thereafter the Quran proceeds in 52:34, 35 to challenge disbelievers that, if they look upon the revelation of the Quran to be a fabrication, then they should come forward and make a prophecy like the one made above. This challenge is unconditional and without qualification. Disbelievers are not required to represent what they produce as the word of God, nor is it laid down as a condition that their prophecy should be of their own devising. They may as they like either make a prophecy of their own devising or borrow it from any other Scripture. Again, disbelievers are not asked to bring forward as many prophecies as there are in the Quran—and these are legion—but to bring forward only one single prophecy similar to any one of the prophecies made in the beginning of the *Sūrah*. They are told that they will not be able to fulfil this demand, for such a prophecy could be made only by the Being Who is the Creator and Owner of the heavens and the earth, along with their treasures, and Who not only knows, but possesses mastery of, the unseen. This challenge also stands for all time.

The fifth challenge to produce a like of the Quran is contained in the verse under comment (2:24) and here also, as in 10:39, disbelievers have been called upon to bring a *Sūrah* like that of the Quran, not in refutation of any of their objections, but in support of a claim made by the Quran itself. In the case of the verse under comment this claim is stated in the beginning of the *Sūrah* in 2:3 which

says: *This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous*. Similarly, 10:39 is also preceded with the words: *there is no doubt about it* (10:38). This shows that the challenge to produce a chapter like one of the Quran has special reference to the peculiarity which is described by the words, *there is no doubt about it*. The challenge given in the present *Sūrah* is preceded by the claim that the Quran is a guidance for those who fear God (2:3), which means that it guides the righteous to the highest stages of spiritual progress. Hence in the above challenge it has been declared that if disbelievers are in doubt as to the Divine origin of the Quran, then they should bring forward a *Sūrah* that may be comparable to the Quran in the spiritual influence it exercises over its followers.

One of the characteristics of the Quran is that, whatever chapter of it we may read, it casts a subtle and sublime spiritual influence over our minds. Thus, instead of creating doubts it dispels them and takes men to a stage where no doubt can possibly survive, which is the stage of communion with God. This stage can be attained only by the study of the Quran; no other Book can compare with it in this respect.

The above explanation will show that all these challenges calling upon disbelievers to produce the like of the Quran are quite distinct and separate one from another, and all of them stand for all time, none of them superseding or cancelling any other. The misconception that these

challenges are one and the same seems to have arisen from the wrong notion that in all of them it is the elegance of the Quranic style and diction that has been held out as unique and incomparable and that it is such elegance of Arabic diction that disbelievers have been called upon to produce. But this is not the case. The challenges made in the five *Sūrahs* referred to above are not one or identical nor do they make the same demand; each has a distinct and separate demand of its own and it is in keeping with the nature of these demands that disbelievers have been called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran or a part of it.

The question now remains whether these demands also include a challenge to produce a work comparable to the Quran in elegance of style and diction. The answer is that they certainly do so, but only in an indirect way and not as a direct and fundamental demand, for sublime ideas can only be expressed in sublime language. As the Quran comprises sublime and lofty ideas, it was inevitable that the most beautiful diction and the most chaste style should have been employed as the vehicle for the expression of those ideas; otherwise, the subject matter was liable to remain obscure and doubtful and the perfect beauty of the Quran would have become marred. Thus, in whatever form and in whatever respect disbelievers have been challenged to produce a composition like the Quran, the demand for beauty of style and elegance of diction comparable to those of the Quran also forms a part

25. But if you do *it* not—and never shall you do *it*—then guard against the Fire, <sup>a</sup>whose fuel is men and stones, *which* is prepared for the disbelievers.<sup>31</sup>

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا  
النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ  
أَعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:11; 66:7.

of the challenge.

### 31. Important Words:

الحجارة (stones) is the plural of الحجر (a stone) which is derived from the verb حجر which means, he or it prevented or hindered or resisted. A stone is called حجر because it resists pressure owing to its hardness. الحجر also means, a rock or a great mass of stone; a metal as gold and silver which both together are sometimes called الحجران i.e. the two metals (Lane). Thus coal (not charcoal) would also be looked upon as حجر. The word حجارة may also be used metaphorically for idols made of stone or metal (Kashshāf).

اعدت (prepared) is derived from اعد which again is derived from عد which means, he considered or he counted. اعد means, he prepared a thing and made or kept it ready (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The verse says that if the opponents of Islam are not able to produce the like of the Quran as demanded in the previous verse, they should understand that it is the word of God and that they are not opposing a man but God Himself; they should, therefore, be ready to suffer the lot of those who oppose Divine will.

The clause, *and never shall you do it*, signifies that the disbelievers knew that

the idols had no power of revealing anything; so they would never call upon the idols to help them.

The word "fuel" may also be taken in a figurative sense, in which case the meaning would be that the punishment of Hell is caused by idol-worship. So the idols are like fuel for hellfire, being a means of bringing it into existence. The words الناس (men) and الحجارة (stones) may also be taken as indicating two classes of inmates of Hell. The word الناس (men) which, according to its root, signifies love, has been used to denote those disbelievers who may be called human in so far as they still retain something of the love of God which distinguishes human beings from stones. But the other disbelievers are called الحجارة (stones), for they have no love left for God. Such men are indeed no better than stones.

Though this verse speaks of fire and stones, it should be remembered that what is called the next world is not a material world. In fact, expressions used in the Quran to denote rewards and punishment should not be taken literally but metaphorically. It should also be noted that the punishment of the next world is not everlasting. According to Islam, Hell is not eternal. It is only a



26. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works, that <sup>a</sup>for them are Gardens beneath which flow streams. Whenever they are given a portion of fruit therefrom, they will say: 'This is what was given us before,' and gifts mutually resembling shall be brought to them. And they will have therein <sup>b</sup>mates perfectly pure and therein will they abide.<sup>32</sup>

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:16, 134, 196, 199; 4:14, 58, 123; 5:13, 86; 7:44; 9:72, 89, 100; 10:10; 13:36; 22:15, 24; 25:11; 32:20; 47:16; 58:23; 61:13; 64:10. <sup>b</sup>3:16; 4:58.

reformatory. The subject will be discussed later in its proper place.

### 32. Important Words:

بشر (give glad tidings) is derived from بشر (*bashshara*), i.e. he gave glad tidings, which again is derived from بشر (*bashara*). They say بشر i.e. he laid bare its skin. Thus البشرة means, the outer and visible part of the skin. So بشر (*bashshara*) means, he gave or imparted news which changed the colour of the listener. The word has generally come to be used in connection with good or happy news. But it is also sometimes used in connection with bad news (e.g. 3:22). بشر means, one who announces good news to a people or a person. All Prophets are spoken of as نذير and بشر i.e. givers of good news to those who believe in them and givers of bad news to those who reject them (Aqrab & Mufradât).

الصالحات (good works) is the plural of الصالحة which is derived from the verb صلح (the opposite of فسد) meaning, he or it became good or suitable and proper. هذا الشيء يصلح لك means, this thing is suitable to you or is fit or meet for you (Aqrab). So الصالحات would be used about all those deeds and actions which are not only good intrinsically but are also meet and suitable. See also under 2:12.

جنان (gardens) which is the plural of جنة (a garden) is derived from جن meaning, it veiled, concealed, or covered a thing. So جنة means, any garden having trees by which the ground is covered or concealed; an orchard or garden having luxuriousness and denseness of verdure (Aqrab & Lane). Heaven has been called جنة or garden, because: (1) the mercy of God will 'cover' its dwellers just as trees in an orchard cover the ground thereof; or

(2) because the blessings of Heaven are 'hidden' from the eyes of man"; or again (3) because Heaven is like a garden in which the trees represent good faith and the streams good actions.

نهر (streams) is the plural of نهر (nahr) or نهر (nahar). They say نهر الماء i.e. the water flowed on the earth and cut out a channel for itself. Thus نهر (nahr) or نهر (nahar) means, a channel through which a stream or a river flows; a stream or river itself. نهر (nahar) also means, abundance (Aqrab).

ازواج (mates) is the plural of زوج which signifies, anything that is one of a pair or couple; it does not mean a pair but only one of a pair, whether male or female (Aqrab). The word زوج also means, a comrade (Lane).

خالدون (shall abide) is derived from خلد which means, he remained and lived on. خلد مكان means, he stayed or abided in a place. خلود means, staying on, or living without change or deterioration for a long time but not necessarily forever (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

This verse gives a brief description of the rewards which the believers will have in the next world.

Critics of Islam have raised all sorts of objections to this description. They say that: (1) The promise of such rewards is only an appeal to greed and a faith based upon greed is not worth the name. (2) The Quran promises material rewards to the believers and this is objectionable. (3) If the rewards of the next world

are going to be material, then it must be supposed that the same body which one has in this life will be resurrected after death and this is against all reason, because this body perishes and the particles of one body are used in the making of several other bodies. To whom and to how many will then the same body be given in the next world? (4) Believers are promised wives in Heaven which shows that sex relations will continue in the next world. An appeal to sex is very objectionable for spiritual ends. Sex relations are necessary only for the continuation of the race in this world. Why should there be such a thing in the next? (5) The Quranic Paradise appears to be a place of luxury and sensual pleasures. There is thus nothing spiritual about the Islamic conception of the next life.

This criticism is based on a failure to understand the real Islamic teaching. The Quran has made it clear that in this life it is not possible for man to comprehend the nature of the rewards of the next. It says: *No soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their actions* (32:18). That is to say, whatever the Quran says about Heaven and Hell is only metaphorical. The descriptions are not to be taken in the sense in which they are ordinarily taken in this world. The Holy Prophet says of the blessings of the next world: "No eye has seen them, nor has any ear heard of them; nor can the mind of man form any conception of them" (Bukhārī). If the blessings of the next

life are to be like the joys of this life, we should be able to form some idea of them, no matter how remote they may be. The blessings of the next life, therefore, must be quite different from the blessings of this life.

At another place in the Quran we read: *The similitude of the Heaven promised to the God-fearing is that through it flow streams; its fruit is everlasting, and so is its shade. That is the reward of those who are righteous, and the reward of the disbelievers is Fire* (13:36). Now the fruit of this world is not everlasting, so in order to be everlasting the fruit of the next world as well as its streams will have to be taken as something other than material. Again we read: *A similitude of the Paradise promised to the righteous: Therein are rivers of water which corrupts not; and rivers of milk of which the taste changes not; and rivers of wine, a delight to those who drink; and rivers of clarified honey* (47:16). There is nothing material in this. About the wine of Heaven we read: *Wherein there will be no intoxication, nor will they be exhausted thereby* (37:48). Again, *And their Lord will give them to drink a beverage that is pure* (76:22). Thus, wine in Heaven will not only be pure itself but will purify the drinkers as well. Elsewhere the Quran says that the pure wine of Paradise will be tempered with *Tasnīm* (83:28), which means 'abundance' and 'height'. In the cup of wine that will pass from hand to hand in Heaven God says there will be *neither vanity nor sin* (52:24). As against this, the wine of this world is

described in the Quran as: *Wine and the game of hazard and idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper. Satan desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of wine and the game of hazard and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer* (5:91, 92). This proves that the wine of the next world is quite different; it is pure and purifying and nothing material.

The blessings of Heaven have indeed nothing in common with their counterparts of this world except the name. Ibn 'Abbās, the Prophet's cousin, also says the same thing (Jarīr).

Now the question arises: Why have the blessings of Heaven been given the names used of material things in this world? This is so because Islam is meant for all kinds of people. It does not address only the intellectually advanced but also all others. Therefore it uses simple words which can be understood by all. The disbelievers used to say that the Prophet disallowed the good things of the world, and his followers were thus deprived of all blessings. Therefore, while describing the blessings in store for the Muslims, God used the names of things generally looked upon as good in this world and told the believers that they would get all these things in a better form. The water of this world spoils, but believers would have water in the next which will not spoil. Gardens are blessings but they decay; so believers will have gardens

which will last forever. The unbelievers drank intoxicating wine which made them drunk and which dulled their senses; but the wine which the believers will get in Heaven will be pure and purifying. It is to bring out this important contrast that familiar words are used; otherwise there is nothing common between the delights of this world and the blessings of the next.

It may be added here that, according to Islam, the next life is not spiritual in the sense that it will just consist of a mental state and nothing else. Even in the next life the human soul will have a kind of body; only, it will not be material. One can glean some idea of this from the phenomenon of dreams. The Quran says: *Allah takes the souls of human beings at the time of their death; and (He also takes the souls of), those that have not died, during their sleep. Then He retains those against which He has decreed death, and sends (back) the others till an appointed term. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect* (39:43). Death and sleep resemble each other, the difference being that whereas in death the human soul is completely and permanently severed from the body, in sleep the severance is only temporary and partial. Now the scenes which a man witnesses in a dream cannot be called purely mental or spiritual, because he has a body also in his dreams and finds himself sometimes in gardens and streams, and eats fruits and drinks milk. It is hard to say that the contents of dreams are only mental states. The

milk enjoyed in a dream is no doubt a real experience, but no one can say that it is the material milk found in this world. Dreams have a meaning of their own. For instance, eating mangoes in a dream symbolizes a righteous child or a righteous heart; eating grapes signifies love and fear of God; and eating bananas, a good and lawful subsistence which is also easy of attainment. In short, the spiritual blessings of the next life will not be a mere subjective realization of the gifts of God with which we become familiar in this world. As a matter of fact, what we enjoy here is just a representation of the real and true gifts of God which man will find in the next world.

Again, gardens represent faith; and streams, good actions. Gardens cannot prosper without streams, nor faith without good actions. Therefore faith and actions are inseparable for the attainment of salvation. In the next world, gardens will remind the believers of their faith in this life and streams will remind them of their good works. They will know, then, that their faith and good works have not gone in vain.

The flowing of streams or rivers *beneath* the gardens also implies that every person in Heaven will have a free and unrestricted enjoyment of his portion. In this world, a single stream often serves several gardens and there is the possibility of a quarrel over it; but in Heaven each garden will have its own stream exclusively meant for itself. See also 10:10.

It is wrong to conclude from the words, *This is what was given us*

*before*, that in Heaven the believers will be given such fruit as they will have enjoyed in this world, because, as already explained, the two are not the same. The fruit of the next world will, in fact, be the image of the quality of their own faith. When they will eat it, they will at once recognize and remember that it is the fruit of the faith they had in this world; and it will be out of gratitude for this that they will say: *This is what was given us before*.

The expression rendered as, *was given us*, may also mean, 'was promised us'; and in this sense it would mean, this is what was promised to us in the world.

The word متشابهها (mutually resembling) refers to the resemblance between the acts of worship performed by believers in this world and the fruits thereof in Heaven. The acts of worship performed in this life will appear to believers as fruit in the next. The more sincere and the more appropriate a man's worship, the more will he enjoy his portion of the fruit in Paradise and the better in quality will it be. It, therefore, lies in one's own power to improve the quality of one's fruit as one likes.

The expression, *mutually resembling*, also implies that in Paradise one spiritual food will completely harmonize with the other, so that the possibility of spiritual disease will be eliminated altogether. It also means that the food in Heaven will be suited to each and every individual and to his stage of progress and degree of development.

The words, *they will abide*, signify that the believers will go on abiding in Heaven and will not be subject to any change or decay. Man dies only when he cannot assimilate food or when someone kills him. But since the food of Paradise will be perfectly suited to every individual and since man will have pure and peaceful companions, death and decay will automatically disappear.

The Faithful will also have pure mates in Heaven. A good wife is a joy and a comfort. The Faithful try to have good wives in this world, and they will have good and virtuous company in the next. Yet these joys of Heaven are not physical.

A typical Christian comment on this subject is made by Sir William Muir: "It is very remarkable that the notices in the Coran of this voluptuous paradise are almost entirely confined to a time when, whatever the tendency of his desires, Mohammad was living chaste and temperate with a single wife of three score years of age. It is noteworthy that in the Medina *Sūrahs*, that is, in all the voluminous revelations of the ten years following the Hegira women are only twice referred to as constituting one of the delights of paradise and on both occasions in these simple words: 'And to them (believers) there shall be therein pure wives'. Was it that the soul of Mohammad had at that period no longings after what he had then to satiety the enjoyment of? Or that a closer contact with Jewish principles and morality repressed the budding

pruriency of the revelation, and covered with merited confusion the picture of his sensual paradise which had been drawn at Mecca?" (Muir, page 76).

It is amazing how these Christian critics with pretensions to culture and learning will draw on sheer speculation to attack the honour of a Teacher who is held in the deepest reverence and devotion by many millions of men and women all over the world. They seem emboldened to do so, because Christians today hold political sway over the Muslims. A few centuries of power have made them forget that Muslims ruled over Christendom for a full 1,000 years, and during this time they never said anything unbecoming about Jesus. They respected Christian susceptibilities when Christians were quite unprotected and were much weaker than Muslims are today. Would to God Christians did not feel so elated!

Sir William conveniently ignores the fact that there are other things besides women which are mentioned in the Meccan chapters and to which there is no reference in the Medinite chapters. We read in the Meccan chapters that there will be wine, honey and rivers of milk in Paradise. Was the Holy Prophet deprived even of these things at Mecca that he should have compensated himself by imagining them in Paradise? Nothing could be more absurd than this. Personally the Holy Prophet was much better off at Mecca than he was at Medina. His rich wife Khadījah was then alive and she had placed all

her wealth at his disposal. By the time he reached Medina, most of this wealth had been spent in good works and the Holy Prophet was left a poor man with little to live on. If the picture of Paradise was an imaged compensation for his wants, it should have emerged at Medina instead of at Mecca.

Supposing Sir William is right, cannot critics of Christianity say justifiably that Jesus imagined himself the king of the Jews because he was persecuted everywhere? Could they not also say that as Jesus saw nothing of sex life in this world, he remained obsessed with the idea of a second advent and imagined himself a bridegroom taking no less than five virgins for wives? In the words of the New Testament, he is reported to have said: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps...And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut" (Matt. 25:1-10). A bridegroom surrounded by a bevy of virgins—is not this the Heaven of

27. Allāh <sup>a</sup>disdains not to <sup>b</sup>give an illustration as small as a gnat or even smaller. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord, while those who disbelieve say, ‘What does Allah mean by such an illustration?’ ‘Many does He

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيَ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا  
بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ الْحَقَّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا  
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ  
بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ

<sup>a</sup>33:54. <sup>b</sup>14:25; 16:76, 113; 47:4; 66:12. <sup>c</sup>6:118; 7:187; 13:28; 16:94; 40:35.

Jesus' imagination?

But to revert to the subject; the disbelievers at Mecca used to taunt the Muslims about their poverty, saying they had nothing of the good things which they had, so God took over their own phrases and said that the rewards which believers would have in Paradise would be even better. When Islam was established at Medina, the disbelievers gave up their taunts. So God also dropped the earlier descriptions of Paradise. The descriptions in their deep significance, however, hold for all time.

At Mecca, moreover, it was necessary to explain and emphasize the basic belief of Islam. Therefore, greater detail of doctrine is found in the Meccan chapters, and as Paradise, the abode of believers in the afterlife, is an important item of belief, it is dealt with in detail in them. At Medina, on the contrary, practical matters like personal ethics and social legislation became more important. Therefore, greater attention was given to them in the Medinite chapters. The Meccan *Sūrah*s also abound in descriptions of Hell. What are they a compensation for?

Sir William Muir also suggests that the Holy Prophet changed his views about Paradise under the influence of the Jews and the Christians of Medina. But he forgets that the stock criticism made by Christian writers is that some Christian slaves had taught the Holy Prophet the Christian scriptures, the substance of which was incorporated in the Quran. Sir William himself alleges that the Holy Prophet learnt Christianity from Ṣuḥaib, a Roman slave at Mecca (The Life of Mahomet, p.67). If the Holy Prophet at Mecca already knew the Christian teachings, he need not have waited for their influence until his arrival at Medina. In point of fact, in the Jewish and the Christian scriptures, there are no descriptions of Paradise. The Jews and the Christians have remained so engrossed in the affairs of this life that their Books do not say much about the life to come. The promises made by their Prophets about the next life have always been taken by them to pertain only to this life. It cannot be imagined that anybody could be influenced by such a teaching.

adjudge by it to be erring and many by it does He guide, and none does He adjudge thereby to be erring except the disobedient,<sup>33</sup>

كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

### 33. Important Words:

يَسْتَحِي (disdains) is derived from حَي which means: (1) he lived or had life; (2) he felt or had a sense of shame or shyness or bashfulness. The infinitive حَيَاء means, sense of shame or modesty or shyness or bashfulness; or keeping back from a thing through fear of blame. اسْتَحْيَا means, he felt a sense of shame or shyness; he kept back, or he forbore, or he shrank from. اسْتَحْيَى مِنْ كَذَا means, he disdained it, or he refused to do it by reason of pride, or he kept far from it (Lane).

يُضِل (He adjudges to be erring) is from اضل which is derived from ضل which means, he went astray; he lost his way; he erred; he was lost; he perished. اضل is the transitive form of ضل. They say اضله i.e. he led him astray; he caused him to err; he lost him or it; he caused him to perish. اضله also means, he found him to be erring or straying or lost, etc. (Lane). اضله الله may also mean, (1) God adjudged him to be erring or He adjudged him to have gone astray; (2) God forsook or abandoned him and he went astray (Kashshāf). See also 1:7.

الْفَاسِقِينَ (the disobedient) is the plural of فاسق which is derived from the verb فسق which means, he left the right course, or he declined from the right path. فسق عن امره means, he departed from the command of his Lord; he disobeyed his Lord. فاسق is thus one

who departs from the right course or from the way of truth, or from the limits of the law, or from the bounds of obedience. The word is generally applied to one who first takes upon himself to obey an authority or to observe the ordinances of a law and then falls short of it (Lane & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

If, as described in the previous verse, there is not much in common between the gifts of this world and those of the next, why has the Quran given a description of Heaven at all? This question is answered in the present verse. Even if the picture of Heaven and Hell given in the Quran is not exact, it cannot be denied that the imagery used enlightens and helps us to form an idea of the next life. God has, no doubt, described Heaven and Hell by using metaphors and similes, but no one can say that they are useless. Metaphors and similes are used in all languages, and they express depths of meaning which cannot be reached otherwise, and in things of the spirit they afford perhaps the only method by which ideas can be conveyed. The words used for describing Heaven may be as inadequate and insignificant as a gnat; nevertheless they help to conjure up the picture. The believers know the words are only metaphorical and try to get to the depth of



28. Who <sup>a</sup>break the covenant of Allah after having established it, and cut asunder what Allah has bidden to be joined, and create disorder in the earth; it is these that are the losers.<sup>34</sup>

الَّذِينَ يَقْضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ  
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ  
وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ  
الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:101; 4:156; 5:14; 13:26.

their meaning; but the disbelievers begin to find fault with them and increase in error and misguidance.

The words يضل به كثيرا (lit. many does He misguide) have been translated in the text as, many does He adjudge by it to be erring. This, as shown under Important Words above, is a perfectly correct rendering, for though misguidance springs from one's own self, as the verse itself makes clear in the concluding clause, yet it is God, the final Judge, Who declares or adjudges the misguided to be so.

### 34. Important Words:

ميثاق (having established it) is derived from وثق which means, it became firm and established. اوثقه means, he made it firm and fast; he bound or tied it firmly and strongly (Aqrab).

الخاسرون (losers) which is the plural of خاسر is derived from خسر which means, he lost; he suffered a loss; he went astray; he became lost; he perished. Thus خاسر means one who loses or suffers a loss, or one who goes astray (Lane). See also 6:13.

This verse gives some characteristics of فاسقين (the disobedient) mentioned in the previous verse. These characteristics are that: (1) they break the covenant

made with God; (2) they cut asunder the relations which God commands to be strengthened; and (3) they create disorder and mischief in the earth.

Regarding the first, it should be remembered that the covenant which they break has been mentioned in the following two verses:

(a) *And when thy Lord brings forth from Adam's children—out of their loins—their offspring and makes them witnesses against their own selves by saying 'Am I not your Lord?' they say, 'Yea, we do bear witness.' This He does lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We were surely unaware of this' (7:173).*

(b) *And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets, saying: 'Whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom and then there comes to you a Messenger, fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him.' And He said: 'Do you agree, and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter?' They said, 'We agree'; He said, 'Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses' (3:82).*

Regarding the second characteristic, it should be remembered that love of God dies in

29. How can you disbelieve in Allah? When you were without life, and "He gave you life, and then will He cause you to die, then restore you to life, and then to Him shall you be made to return."<sup>35</sup>

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا  
فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ  
ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>19:34; 22:67; 30:41; 40:12; 45:27.

their hearts and they do not try to establish any relation with Him; or if the relation has once been established, they allow it to be broken. Their love is confined to things of this world and all their attention is given to them.

Thirdly, the verse points out that even their love of the world is not sincere, for if it were so, they would protect it against disorder and mischief; but as matters stand, they themselves ruin it by creating disorder and mischief. So they are losers in every respect.

### 35. Important Words:

ميت (without life) is the plural of اموات which means: (1) a thing dead, or (2) a thing without life. Thus the word ميت is used both for a thing which so far has had no life and for a thing which had had life but is now dead. The word ميت is also used about one who is dying or is nearing death but has not yet died (Lane). See also 2:20.

احيا (he gave life) is derived from حي which means, he lived or he had life. The transitive form احيا means, he gave life, he brought to life, he saved the life of (Aqrab & Lane).

حياة (life) which is the opposite of موت (death) signifies: (1) the faculty of

growth, as in an animal or a plant; (2) the faculty of sensation; (3) the faculty of intellect; (4) freedom from grief or sorrow; (5) everlasting life in the world to come; (6) advantage or profit or a means thereof; (7) state of activity and power (Lane).

تكفرون (you disbelieve) is derived from كفر (he disbelieved) already explained under 2:7. The infinitive form is كفر (disbelief). كفر بالله (disbelief in Allah) means not only disbelieving in the existence of God but also denying His attributes and refusing to obey His commandments.

### Commentary:

This verse reverts to the original subject of revelation. The question of the reward of believers and the punishment of disbelievers was only incidental. The real subject is that of revelation. In this verse the Quran explains why spiritual life would be impossible without revelation. Nobody can know anything about the next life without the help and guidance of God Who alone knows everything. The verse points out that when God provides for our physical needs, there is no reason why He should not provide for our spiritual needs, which are much more

30. <sup>a</sup>He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth; then <sup>b</sup>He turned towards the heaven, and He perfected them as seven heavens: and He knows all things.<sup>36</sup>

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ  
سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝٣٦

<sup>a</sup>22:66; 31:21; 45:14. <sup>b</sup>7:55; 10:4; 41:10-13.

important.

God is Wise. If human life had no purpose, God would not have created it; having created it, He would not have made it subject to death, unless there had been an afterlife. If death were the end of all life, the creation of man would turn out to be mere sport. The fact that God does all this shows that He has created man not to return to dust after a life of 60 or 70 years but for a better, fuller and everlasting life, which he must live after death.

The word "then" in the clause, *then to Him shall you be made to return*, hints that after death the human soul does not at once go to Heaven or Hell. There is an interim period in which the soul is made to taste *some* of the good or bad results of its deeds. The resurrection which will herald a full and complete requital will take place later.

The mentioning of life twice (in the words *احيا* and *يعيى*) may also refer to the rise of Islam in this world, for Islam is the means of spiritual life. Islam had its first life in the time of the Holy Prophet; the second life was to come in the Latter Days. This is referred to in 62: 4, where it is said that the Holy Prophet of Islam will make, as it were, a second appearance in the world. The

promise has been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.

### 36. Important Words:

*استوى* (he turned) is derived from *سوى* meaning, it became straight and even and rightly set. *استوى* gives the same meaning as *سوى*. It also means, he became firm or was firmly settled. *استوى على ظهر دابة* means, he became firmly seated on the horse or the like. *استوى على العرش* means, he (the king) was or became firmly established on the throne. *استوى الى الشيء* means, he turned to a thing, or he directed his attention to it (Aqrab). *استوى* gives different meanings when used with regard to two or more things as opposed to when used with regard to one thing only. When used about more than one thing, it means, to be or to become equal; and when used about one thing only it means, to become straight and firm (Mufradāt).

*سواهن* (perfected them) is derived from *سوى* (*Sawwā*) which is the transitive form of *سوى* (*sawiya*) for which see above. *سوى* means, he made it uniform or even; he made it congruous or consistent in its several parts; he fashioned it in a suitable manner; he made it adapted to the exigencies, or requirements, of its case; he perfected it; he made it in a

right or good manner; or he put it into a right or good state (Aqrab & Lane).

### **Commentary:**

Whatever is on the earth is created by God for the benefit of man. Elsewhere we read, *And He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect* (45:14). The sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies are of immense benefit to mankind. Modern science has made many discoveries in this connection and more may yet be made, all of which testify to the truth and comprehensiveness of the Quranic teaching. Science also continues to find more and more the properties of things of this earth; many things which were formerly thought to be useless are now known to be highly serviceable to man.

Again, of all creatures man alone has the knowledge to profit by the things of the world. When so many things have been created to promote the comfort of man and to extend the field of his activities, and when such unlimited provision has been made for his material advance, it cannot be said that there is no purpose in the creation of man or no provision for his spiritual advance.

The verse also hints that the world is the common inheritance of mankind. It should not become the property of one man or one nation. By ignoring this great truth, Europe is now going to rack and ruin.

If the teachings of the Quran are acted upon, envy and malice between individuals and nations will disappear.

The ordinances of Islam regarding charity and Zakāh are also based upon this conception of the world being the common inheritance of all men. Islam does not disallow the right of private ownership but this is not to be exercised so as to deprive others of their right to the common inheritance.

It should also be noted that, according to most religions, this world is not a desirable place for man. Salvation, according to them, lies in killing desire or escaping from evil and suffering. The Jews, on the other hand, make this world the sole end of life. It is Islam alone that teaches man to use rightly the gifts and opportunities which this world affords and to make them a means of attaining success and salvation in the next.

The words, *He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth; then He turned towards the heaven*, do not refer to the creation of the earth or the heavens. The verse only purports to say that whatever has been created in the earth is for the benefit of man. Then it goes on to say that those who make good use of the gifts of God will advance to higher and still higher stages of spiritual progress. The words "seven heavens" signify seven stages of spiritual progress, the figure seven, according to Arabic idiom, standing for perfection and completeness. So God has not omitted to provide a place of everlasting spiritual progress, viz. Paradise of the next world.

With this verse concludes the present discussion about the necessity of revelation. The way God has created the universe points to the necessity of revelation. If man is not

**R. 4.**

31. And when thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to place a "vicegerent in the earth," they said, 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood?—and We glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered, 'I know what you know not.'<sup>37</sup>

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ  
فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةً ۚ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِیْهَا  
مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا وَیَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ  
وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۚ  
قَالَ اِنِّىْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝۳۱

<sup>a</sup>7:130; 10:15; 15:29; 24:56; 38:27.

destined for unlimited spiritual progress for which revelation is the only effective means, there was no need to create the heaven and the earth and whatever is in them for his benefit, nor were the powers and capabilities, with which he has been equipped, necessary for him. All this is to enable him to make endless progress.

**37. Important Words:**

قال (said) is a common Arabic word meaning, he said. Sometimes, however, it is used in a figurative sense when, instead of a verbal expression, a state or condition amounting to a verbal expression is meant. For example, the expression امتلأ الخوض وقال قطنى i.e. the tank became full, and said, 'that will suffice', does not mean that the tank actually said so; it simply means that its condition implied that it was full. The word is also used in the sense of holding a view. We say فلان يقول ابن حنيفة i.e. that man holds a view similar to that of Abū Ḥanīfah. Again, the word is

sometimes used to denote something not yet spoken but still in the mind. We say: فى نفسى قول لم اظهره i.e. there is something in my mind which I have not yet disclosed (Lisān & Mufradāt).

الملائكة (the angels) is the plural of ملك (an angel). Authorities differ as to the derivation of the word. Some derive it from ملك but the more commonly accepted derivation is from الك which is used in the sense of conveying a message, the word الوكة meaning 'a message' (Mufradāt & Lane). This explains the object of the creation of the angels. They are meant to convey God's message to men and to execute His will in the universe.

خليفة (vicegerent) is derived from خلف which means, he came after, or stood in place of. The word خليفة is used in three different senses: (1) one who comes after and stands in the place of someone, (2) an امام (Imām) or supreme religious head and (3) a sovereign or king or ruler (Aqrah). The word is also used for one who precedes someone and is followed by him (Qadīr).

سبح (we glorify) is derived from سبح i.e. he went or travelled far away. سبح عن الامر means, he got freedom from the affair, having completed it. سبح في الماء means, he swam in the water. سبح في الفلك means, the planet, etc. glided in the firmament. سبح الله means, he prayed. سبح الله or سبح لله means, he declared God to be free from all defects and weaknesses; he glorified God (Aqrab). The word is used about God and conveys the sense of glorifying Him and declaring Him to be free from all defects—anything that may detract from, and adversely affect, His attributes of Oneness, Knowledge, Power, Purity, etc. (Tāj & Mufradāt).

نقدس (extol holiness) is derived from قدس i.e. he became pure and blessed. قدس الله means, God purified and blessed him. قدس الرجل الله means, the man declared God to be holy and free from defects (Aqrab). The word thus has a meaning similar to the preceding word, i.e. *nusabbiḥu*, but it conveys the further sense of ascribing to God the positive attributes of Holiness, Majesty, etc. (Lisān & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

This verse is important, and commentators have differed about its meaning. Who was Adam, where was he placed, why did God speak to the angels about his being appointed as *khalīfah*, why did the angels object to this appointment, are some of the questions which arise here at once.

But before dealing with them, it is necessary to explain what connection this verse has with the preceding one, and why the Quran refers to Adam,

while discussing the ministry of the Holy Prophet of Islam. If the Holy Prophet was a true Messenger of God, was he the first to receive a message from heaven or did similar messages precede his? If he was the first Messenger, did God neglect those of His countless creatures who lived before him? These questions make the subject of Adam's ministry at once relevant. The verse is intended to convey that the Holy Prophet is not the first Prophet; others have gone before him and Adam was the first link of the chain. Thus, by making a reference to the ministry of Adam, God removes the doubt agitating the minds of disbelievers about the mission of the Holy Prophet. It does not matter, if they do not understand his mission; even the angels did not understand the purpose of prophethood at its inception.

Adam, who lived about 6,000 years ago, is popularly believed to be the first man created by God upon this earth. This view is, however, not corroborated by a close study of the relevant facts. The truth is that the world has passed through different cycles of creation and civilization, and Adam, the progenitor of the present human race, is only the first link in the present cycle, and not the very first man in God's creation. Nations have risen and fallen, civilizations have appeared and disappeared. Other Adams may have gone before our Adam; other races may have lived and perished, and other cycles of civilization appeared and disappeared. This view has also been held by certain eminent Muslim savants. Muḥy-ud-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, the great

mystic, says that once he saw himself in a dream performing a circuit of the Ka'bah. In this dream a man appeared before him and claimed to be one of his ancestors. "How long is it since you died?" asked Ibn 'Arabī. The man replied, "More than forty thousand years." "But this period is much more than what separates us from Adam," said Ibn 'Arabī. The man replied, "Of which Adam are you speaking? About the Adam who is nearest to you or of some other?" "Then I recollected," says Ibn 'Arabī, "the saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that God had brought into being no less than a hundred thousand Adams, and I said to myself, 'Perhaps this man who claims to be an ancestor of mine was one of the previous Adams' " (Futūḥāt, iii. 607).

If the period covered by the progeny of each Adam be taken to be of seven thousand years, on an average, then, on the basis of the Holy Prophet's saying referred to above, the age of the human race, as such, works out to be 700 million years; and this is the age of the progeny only of Adams, which does not include such races as may have passed before the creation of the first Adam. As against this, modern science gives one million years as the age of the human race (Enc. Br. 14th Edition, xiv, 767).

It is not claimed that the race which lived before Adam was entirely swept away before he was born. Most probably, there had remained a small degenerated remnant of the old race and Adam was one of them. God then selected him to be the progenitor of a

new race and the precursor of a new civilization. Created, as it were, out of the dead, he represented the dawn of a new era of life. In this connection we may well quote from one of the speeches of the Promised Messiah, Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement:

"We do not follow the Bible in holding that the world began with the birth of Adam six or seven thousand years ago, and that before this there was nothing, and God was, as it were, idle and without work. Neither do we claim that all mankind, who are now found in different parts of the earth, are the progeny of the selfsame Adam. On the contrary, we hold that this Adam was not the first man. Mankind existed even before him, as is hinted by the Quran itself, when it says of Adam, 'I am about to place a *Khalīfah* in the earth.' As *khalīfah* means a successor, it is clear that men existed even before Adam. Hence, we cannot say whether the original inhabitants of America, Australia, etc. are the progeny of this last Adam, or of some other Adam gone before him" (*Al-Ḥakam* May 30th, 1908).

The word *khalīfah* used about Adam in the verse has, as pointed out above, a reference to the fact that he was a remnant or successor of the old race and was selected by God to bring into being a new race; it also means a vicegerent of God—an Imām or leader appointed by God to fulfil a special mission.

The question here arises, why did the angels object to Adam's appointment as *Khalīfah*? In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the so-called objection is not

really an objection; it is merely a presentation of facts placed before God, not by way of objection but to gain knowledge and obtain enlightenment. In fact, whenever a new Prophet is raised, God intends to bring about through him a revolution in the world, a change in the existing system, an ushering in of a new era. This process naturally entails the destruction of the old system and the construction of a new one. This was to be particularly the case with Adam's ministry, as he was the first Messenger of a new order.

The people before Adam were without Law and lived almost like savages. Law was to be introduced through Adam and with the introduction of Law was to come sin, for sin is nothing but the breaking of Law. The angels, with their limited knowledge and little insight into the future, were naturally perturbed at the idea that with the ministry of Adam, sin and disobedience would come into being, and people would thenceforward begin to be condemned and punished for acts against which there had previously been no bar. In the view of the angels, Adam was nothing but a Lawgiver who was to prescribe limitations for the actions of man and mete out punishment to those who transgressed. The future *Khalifah* was thus going to shed blood and create disorder in the earth by shaking the foundations of society.

The angels saw the darker side of the picture only, but God saw the brighter side. Adam was, in the sight of God, a trumpet through which His clarion call was going to be sounded to the people. The dead were going to

be quickened and the slumberers awakened from their sleep. Henceforward, there were to come into being men who would know their God and manifest His attributes and lead pious and righteous lives.

God could not leave mankind in a state of spiritual death, just because one section would have to be dubbed as disobedient. One obedient soul was better in the sight of God than a million disobedient ones. Scattered spots of light with patches of darkness, however large, were better than a universal veil of gloom covering the entire earth.

Moreover, Adam and his message could not be held responsible for the recalcitrant spirits who rejected him. He was only a harbinger of mercy, and those who rejected him and, thereby incurred the displeasure of God were themselves to blame for their doom. The sun is not to be condemned for the shadows that must result from its light.

This is the deep truth underlying the story which the verse under discussion narrates to the world, and the verse has been very fittingly placed in the beginning of the Quran to serve as a warning and an eye-opener for those to whom the message of the Holy Prophet of Islam was addressed. The Prophet was bringing light from God and in the wake of his message was to come a gigantic process of destruction and construction for which mankind was to be prepared. Some were to be awakened from sleep and saved from fire, and others to be shaken out of slumber to commit yet more acts of mischief and fan the fire that was



blazing. But the believers, however small in number, were far weightier in the sight of God than hosts of disbelievers who had brought destruction on their own heads. Nay, the Prophet taken singly was weightier than the whole of mankind put together. According to a ḥadīth God said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ "But for thee, O Muḥammad, I would not have cared to bring into being the whole universe." This is not an idle boast but a statement full of truth and wisdom. For, is not a grain of truth better than a whole mountain of falsehood? And the Prophet was not a grain of truth, but a whole mountain of it. In the verse under discussion, and for that matter, in the verses that follow, the conversation between God and angels need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense, i.e. it is not necessary that the dialogue should have actually taken place in so many words. As explained under Important Words, the word قال is sometimes used in a figurative sense to convey not actually a verbal expression, but simply a state or condition amounting to a verbal expression. In this sense, it would not be necessary to hold that God actually spoke the words ascribed to Him or that the angels actually replied in so many words. It may simply mean that the angels by their state or condition implied a reply that has been here ascribed to them in words.

Much has been said about the place where Adam was born or where he was raised as a Reformer. The popular view is that he was placed in Paradise but was later expelled

therefrom and put somewhere on the earth. But the words *in the earth* belie this view. These words definitely prove that Adam lived on the earth and it was on the earth that he was raised as a Reformer. As to the place of Adam's residence, it may be noted that a study of the relevant facts, into a detailed discussion of which we need not go here, indicates that most probably Adam was first made to live in Iraq but was later directed to move down to a neighbouring land.

As we have not held Adam—God's vicegerent spoken of in this verse—to be the first man created by God, we will not enter here into the discussion as to how and when the first man was created. The subject of the initial creation of man will be dealt with under relevant verses. As will be noted, the word *khalīfah* has been used in the verse under comment in the sense of a Prophet; for truly speaking Prophets are also the *khalīfas* of God, manifesting the divine attributes in accordance with the requirements of their age. In fact, the word *khalīfah* has been used in three senses:

*Firstly*, it is used to denote a Prophet of God. Prophets are, as it were, the images of God. Adam was a *khalīfah* in this sense. David has also been called a *khalīfah* in this sense in the Quran. Says God: (*We said*), *O David, We have made thee a khalīfah or vicegerent in the earth'* (38:27).

*Secondly*, the word *khalīfah* is spoken of a people who come after and stand in place of another. Thus, when a people decline or are destroyed and another people take

their place, the latter are called their *khalīfahs* as in 7:70 and 7:75.

Thirdly, the successors of a Prophet are also called *khalīfahs* because they follow in his footsteps and enforce his Law and maintain unity among his followers. Such a *khalīfah* may either be elected by the people or appointed by the Prophet or raised directly by God as a Prophet serving the cause of the preceding one. Abū Bakr was a *Khalīfah* of the Holy Prophet elected by the people after him. Moses appointed Aaron as his *khalīfah* when he went up the Mount, saying to him, *Act for me (lit. be my khalīfah) among my people in my absence, and manage them well, and follow not the way of those who cause disorder* (7:143). Though Aaron was a Prophet himself, yet he also acted as a *khalīfah* in the absence of Moses. In the same way, God sometimes raises a Prophet to reform the followers of another Prophet. Such a Prophet does not bring a new Law but only enforces the existing Law. As he carries on the work of his predecessor, he is called his *khalīfah* or successor. He is neither appointed by his predecessor nor elected by the people but is directly commissioned by God. There have been many such *khalīfahs* among the Israelites. They were Prophets of God but brought no new Law, simply serving the Law of Moses (5:45). Jesus was the last of these *khalīfahs*. He brought no new Law as he himself says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass,

one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18).

Muslims have been promised all these three kinds of *khalīfahs*. Says the Quran: *Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and do good works, that He will surely make them khalīfahs in the earth, as He made khalīfahs those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely change their condition, after their fear, into peace and security: They will worship Me, (and) they will not associate anything with Me. But whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious* (24:56). God made Muslims the inheritors of the earth in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Then after the Holy Prophet He established the *Khilāfat* of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī. And finally now, according to the Aḥmadiyya Movement, God has made Aḥmad of Qadian a *Khalīfah* of the Holy Prophet in the same sense in which He made Jesus a *khalīfah* of Moses. Aḥmad has attained to prophethood by following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet and has brought no new Law. He has been raised to serve Islam and make it dominant in the world.

This is the first verse of the Quran which makes mention of angels, so a short note about them will not be out of place here.

As pointed out under Important Words, the word ملك has the literal meaning of a "message-bearer" or "agent". This explains the object of

the creation of the angels. They bring messages of God and execute His will in the universe. This does not mean that God is not All-Powerful and All-Knowing and All-Encompassing and that He stands in need of any agents to execute His will or to carry His messages. But in His eternal wisdom He has decided to work with a system. Just as He has a system in the physical world, He has a system in the spiritual world also. The establishment of a system or a method of work is not due to any weakness in God but is, on the other hand, a sign of perfection. Thus angels are part of the system with which God executes His will in both the physical and the spiritual worlds. In the physical world they form the first link, with a number of physical links descending downwards but in the spiritual world they form a direct link between God and man. We may not quite understand the nature of their being, but we may well understand the object of their creation and the functions which they are meant to perform.

According to the teachings of Islam, there is quite a large number of angels, and they are divided into classes, each occupying a definite position and serving a definite purpose. They exercise their influence in their respective spheres and serve as agents for executing God's will. In the physical world they remain, so to speak, behind the curtain and exercise their influence, through physical agencies working in the universe. It is only when we come to the final physical agency that the

sphere of the angels begins. In the spiritual world, however, the influence of the angels is more evident. It is direct and works without any intervening agency. This is one of the reasons why Islam has included belief in angels among the fundamental articles of faith (2:286), because as matters stand, disbelief in angels would mean shutting off the whole avenue through which the light of God comes to man.

Angels are not visible to the physical eye. Yet they do sometimes appear to man in one form or another. This appearance, however, is not real but simply a sort of manifestation. This is why the appearance of the same angel at different times may assume different forms. The contact, however, is not imaginary but real, and exercises direct influence which is definitely felt and may even be tested through its results. There are several Aḥadīth to the effect that angels appeared to the Holy Prophet a number of times in one form or another. It must, however, be definitely understood that when we speak of an angel appearing to a human being, we do not mean his actual descending on the earth and leaving his fixed station in the heavens. We simply mean his manifestation by means of which he assumes a form which becomes visible to man. It must further be understood that an angel is not merely a force but a living being who executes the will of his Lord, wherever and in whatever manner demanded.

As for the functions of angels, the

32. And He taught Adam all <sup>a</sup>the names, then He put *the objects of these names* before the angels and said, ‘Tell Me the names of these, if you are right.’<sup>38</sup>

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ  
عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ  
هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:181; 17:111; 20:9; 59:24, 25.

Quran enumerates a number of them, some of the more important being the following:

1. They are bearers of Divine Messages (22:76).

2. They inspire men to do righteous deeds, moving their hearts to virtue (91:9; also Tirmidhī, ch. on *Tafsīr*).

3. They serve the Prophets and help their cause (15:30; 4:167); they also help believers (41:31, 32).

4. They bring punishment upon those who oppose the Prophets (6:159); and strike their enemies with fear and awe (3:125, 126).

5. They enforce the laws of nature and, as it were, bear the Throne of God on their shoulders (40:8).

The reason why angels have been mentioned in this verse in connection with the mission of Adam is that, as indicated above, one of the functions of the angels is to help the Messengers of God; so whenever a new Prophet is raised in the world, the angels are bidden to serve him by bringing into play the different forces of nature to help his cause. When, therefore, God decided to raise Adam as a Reformer, He informed the angels of His decision so that they should devote themselves to his service.

For a fuller discussion of the subject of angels the reader is referred to

(1) *Tauḍīḥ* and (2) *Ā'īnah* by the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement and (3) *Malā'ikah* by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, the Second *Khalīfah* of the Aḥmadiyya Community.

### 38. Important Words:

اسماء (names) is the plural of اسم for which see note on 1:1. اسم means, (1) the name of a thing, i.e. a word fixed for a thing or attribute for the purpose of distinction; (2) a mark or sign of a thing (Aqrab); (3) fame or reputation of a person or thing (Lane); (4) a word, its meanings and combinations (Mufradāt).

صادقين (right) is the plural of صادق which is derived from صدق. They say صدق في ظنه i.e. he was or is correct in his opinion (Lane). صدق في الحديث means, he spoke the truth. صدقه means, he was sincere to him or he was his well-wisher (Aqrab). صدقت means: (1) you are speaking the truth, not a lie (2) what you say is right, not wrong. It is in the latter sense that the word has been used in the present verse.

### Commentary:

Commentators differ as to what is here meant by the word اسماء (names). Some think that God taught Adam the names of different things and objects, i.e. He taught him language. Others

hold that God taught him the names of his offspring.

There is no doubt that man needed language in order to become civilized and God must have taught Adam a language, but the Quran indicates that there are أسماء (names or attributes) which man must learn for the perfection of his religion and morals. They are referred to in the verse: *And to Allah alone belong all perfect attributes; so call on Him by these and leave alone those who deviate from the right way with respect to His attributes. They shall be requited with what they do* (7:181). This verse shows that man cannot attain to divine knowledge without a correct conception of God's أسماء or attributes and that this can be taught only by God. So it was necessary that God should have, in the very beginning, given Adam knowledge of His attributes so that man should know and recognize Him and attain His nearness, and should not drift away from Him.

The verse quoted above (7:181) shows that the word أسماء (names) is used to signify the attributes of God and that a Muslim must be familiar with those attributes, so that he may pray to Him, invoking attributes most suited to the nature of the prayer. For example, if one prays for forgiveness and mercy, one should invoke the attributes of forgiveness and mercy; and if the prayer be for the attainment of righteousness, God should be invoked by names which pertain to that quality. The above verse also indicates that man must not of himself devise the attributes of God, because it is only God who can

describe His attributes; man, being himself the creation of God, cannot do so. In fact, those who try to devise God's attributes have been threatened with divine punishment.

In short, we learn from this verse that a Muslim must know God's أسماء (names) which can be taught by Him alone, and which man has no right to devise out of his own fancy. There is strong evidence that God gave Adam a knowledge of His attributes. The view gains further strength when we take into consideration the difference between man and angel. According to the Quran, man differs from angels in that, whereas the former can be an image or reflex of الاسماء الحسنى i.e. all the divine attributes, the latter represent only a few of them. The Quran says: *They (the angels) do what they are bidden to do* (66:7) which implies that the angels cannot act of their own free will. They have no will of their own, but passively perform the functions allotted to them by Providence. On the other hand, man, endowed with volition and free choice, differs from angels in that he has capabilities which make him a perfect manifestation of all divine attributes. A saying of the Holy Prophet—"the best morals in man are those which are in conformity with the great attributes of God" ('Ummāl, ii. 2)—also points to this. As God is Merciful, we should also show mercy to men; as He is Forgiving, so we must also be ready to forgive our fellow beings; as He connives at faults, so we must try to imitate Him in this particular; and as He protects the weak, so we must be ready to protect the weak, and so on. This

33. They said, ‘Holy art Thou! No knowledge have we except what Thou hast taught us; surely, Thou art the All-Knowing, the Wise.’<sup>39</sup>

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا  
عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٩﴾

injunction of the Holy Prophet justifies the inference that man has the capability to manifest in himself all the attributes of God. Thus, both the Quran and the Holy Prophet's sayings are agreed that man and angel differ in the manifestation of divine attributes, and the "names" in the clause, *He taught Adam all the names*, refer to the attributes of God.

The verse means that God first implanted in Adam free will and the needful capacity for the comprehension of the various divine attributes, and then gave him the knowledge of those attributes, which was impossible without the power of assimilation. The verse that follows corroborates this meaning; for therein it is stated that the أسماء (attributes) were such as were not wholly known to the angels and it is evident that such أسماء are only the divine attributes. The word أسماء may also mean the qualities of different things in nature. As man was to make use of the forces of nature, God gave Adam the capacity of knowing their qualities and properties. The word كل (all) used here does not imply absolute totality. It simply means all that was necessary. The Quran uses this word in this sense elsewhere also (see 6:45; 27:7, 24; 28:58). The pronoun in the words عرضهم (*He put the objects of these names*) shows that the objects referred to here are not inanimate

things; for in Arabic this form of pronoun is used only for rational beings. The meaning of the expression, therefore, would be that God showed Adam in a *kashf* (vision) certain human beings from among his progeny who were to be the manifestations of divine attributes in the future. Such beings were the Prophets or other holy persons who were to enjoy such nearness to God as to become His image and through whom God was to reform mankind. The angels were then asked whether they could manifest the divine attributes like them. This is what is meant by the words, *Tell Me the names of these*, occurring in the present verse.

### 39. Important Words:

سبحانك (Holy art Thou). The word سبحان is the infinitive of سبح for which see 2:31. The infinitive form is used to intensify the meaning.

### Commentary:

As the angels were conscious of their nature and limitations, they frankly confessed that they were unable to reflect God's attributes as man could do, i.e. they could reflect only such of His attributes as He, in His eternal wisdom, had given them the power of reflecting. Man was a fuller image of God than the angels, or, for that matter, any other created being. Says God: *We have created man in the best of constitutions* (95:5).

34. He said, ‘O Adam, tell them their names;’ and when he had told them their names, He said, ‘Did I not say to you, I know the secrets of the heavens and of the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’<sup>40</sup>

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ  
فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ  
أَقُلْ لَّكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ  
وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

#### 40. Important Words:

تكتُمون (you conceal) is derived from كتم meaning, he concealed. They say كتم الشيء i.e. he concealed or suppressed the thing. The Arabs use the expression; كتم الربوة (he suppressed his breath) of a horse who, after running some distance, begins to pant, but having small nostrils, his breath remains, as it were, suppressed or concealed within him (Lane under كتم and عور). So كتمان (the act of concealing or suppressing) need not be deliberate or the result of a desire or attempt to conceal. It may merely be the result of circumstances or only the outcome of nature without an attempt or desire to that effect.

#### Commentary:

When the angels confessed their inability to manifest in themselves all the attributes that Adam could manifest, the latter, in obedience to the Divine will, manifested the different capabilities ingrained in him and showed to the angels the extensiveness of his natural capacities. Thus man proved the necessity of a being who might secure from God the faculty of volition or the power of will by

means of which he might voluntarily take to righteousness, (or, for that matter, to sinning) and might thereby reveal to the world the glory and the greatness of God.

The words, *and I know what you reveal and what you conceal*, mean that God knew which divine attributes the angels manifested in themselves and which they were incapable of manifesting.

The words, *what you conceal*, do not mean that the angels had a desire for, or that they made an attempt at concealment; for, as explained under Important Words, the word كتمان (concealing) is also used to denote a state of affairs without there being any attempt or desire on one's part to conceal or suppress anything. The words, *what you conceal*, therefore, refer to such attributes of God as the angels are unable to reflect in their own being on account of their natural inaptitude. It is a gross error to take the words, *what you reveal and what you conceal*, as signifying that the angels were not telling the whole truth before God.

As already pointed out under 2:31, the conversation between God and angels and Adam, as mentioned in the

35. And *remember the time* "when We said to the angels: 'Submit to Adam,' and they *all* submitted. But Iblīs *did not*. He refused and was too proud; and he was of the disbelievers.<sup>41</sup>

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَكِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ  
فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ط أَلْبَسَ ط وَاسْتَكْبَرَ  
وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

"7:12, 13; 15:29-33; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117; 38:72-77.

verse, need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense. Sometimes the word قال (he said) is used to describe the practical upshot of events without there being any actual speech or dialogue, the purpose of such narration being only to show the existing condition of things in a vivid and graphic form and nothing more. A poet says:

قَالَ لَهُ الْعَيْنَانِ سَمْعًا وَطَاعَةً

i.e. "Both of his eyes said, 'We will listen and obey'," whereas the eyes have no speech. Thus, the conversation embodying the story of Adam may also be nothing more than a portrayal in words.

#### 41. Important Words:

اسجدوا (submit) is derived from سجد which means (1) he humbled or submitted himself; (2) he bowed; (3) he prostrated himself. They say سجدت السفينة للرياح which means, the boat bowed before the wind, i.e. it followed the direction of the wind (Aqrah); (4) the word also means, he obeyed and worshipped (Mufradât).

إلا (but) is used to signify the sense of exception. In Arabic استثناء (exception) is of two kinds: (1) استثناء متصل i.e. an exception in which the thing excepted belongs to the same

class or species to which the things from which an exception is sought to be made, belong, as we say جاء القوم إلا زيداً i.e. all the people came except Zaid. Here Zaid belongs to the same class to which the people belong. (2) استثناء منقطع i.e. an exception in which the excepted thing belongs to a different class or species, as they say جاء القوم إلا الحمرا i.e. all the people came except the donkey. Here the donkey does not belong to the class or species from which exception is sought to be made. In the verse under comment the word إلا denotes the latter kind of exception, Iblīs not being one of the angels.

ابليس (Iblīs) is derived from ابلس which means: (1) his good or virtue became less or decreased; (2) he gave up hope or he despaired of the mercy of God; (3) he became broken in spirit and mournful; (4) he was perplexed and was unable to see his way; (5) he was or became silent on account of grief or despair; (6) he was cut short or silenced in argument; (7) he became unable to prosecute his journey; (8) he was prevented from attaining his wish. ابليس (Iblīs) is generally considered to be a name of Satan (Lane). Based on the root meaning of the word, ابليس is a being who contains little of good and much of evil and who, on account of



his having despaired of God's mercy, owing to His disobedience, is left perplexed and confounded and unable to see his way. *Iblīs* is often considered identical with Satan, but is in some cases different from him, as will appear from the following commentary.

كان (was) is a very common word of the Arabic language giving a vast variety of meanings some of which are: (1) he or it was; (2) he or it is; (3) he or it shall be; (4) he or it came into being; (5) he or it became; etc. The word is also used to express a permanent attribute or quality, as the Quran says: كان الله عليماً حكيماً i.e. Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. The expression ما كان لنبى ان يكون له اسرى means, it does not behove a Prophet, or it does not become a Prophet, or it is not right or proper for a Prophet that captives be taken for him (8:68). The clause ما كان لنبى ان يفعل means, it is impossible for a Prophet to act dishonestly, or a Prophet cannot act dishonestly (3:162) (Aqrab, Mufradāt, Tāj & Kashshāf).

### Commentary:

When Adam became an image of the attributes of God, and attained the rank of a Prophet, God ordered the angels to serve him. The words اسجدوا لآدم do not mean, "Fall prostrate before Adam." The Quran definitely says: *Prostrate not yourselves before the sun, nor before the moon, but prostrate yourselves before Allah, Who created them* (41:38). Thus prostration before Adam by way of worship is opposed to the teachings of the Quran, and a command to that effect could never proceed from God.

The word سجدة has been used here in the sense of "obedience", and "submission". Thus the verse means that God bade the angels to serve Adam, that is, assist him in his mission. In this way, the angels are ordered to serve all the Prophets of God, their chief duty being to help the cause of a Prophet and to draw the hearts of men towards him.

ابليس (*Iblīs*), it must be clearly understood, was not one of the angels, because, whereas *Iblīs* has been here described as disobeying God, the angels have been described as ever 'submissive' and 'obedient'. Says the Quran: *They disobey not Allah in what He commands them, and do what they are commanded* (66:7). Hence ابليس could not be an angel. The objection, why was God angry with *Iblīs* whereas the commandment stated in this verse was meant for the angels and not for him, is baseless, for elsewhere the Quran makes it clear that *Iblīs* was also commanded to serve Adam. God says: *What prevented thee (O Iblīs,) from submitting (to Adam) when I commanded thee?* (7:13). This shows that *Iblīs*, though not an angel, was also ordered to make submission to Adam. Moreover, even if there were no separate commandment for *Iblīs*, the one for angels must be taken to extend to all others, because angels being the custodians or guardians of different parts of the universe, the commandment given to them automatically extends to all.

As to the identity of *Iblīs* it may be briefly stated that, as described under Important Words, *Iblīs* is really an

attributive name given, on the basis of the root meaning of the word, to the Evil Spirit opposed to the angels. *Iblīs* has been so named because he possesses the attributes enumerated under Important Words above, particularly the quality of being deprived of good and of being left bewildered in the way, and of despairing of God's mercy.

That *Iblīs* was not the satan spoken of in 2:37 below is apparent from the fact that the Quran mentions the two names side by side, wherever the story of Adam is given, but everywhere a careful distinction is observed between the two, i.e. wherever the Quran speaks of the being who, unlike the angels, refused to serve Adam, it invariably mentions the name *Iblīs*, and wherever it speaks of the being who beguiled Adam and became the means of his being turned out of *جنة* (garden), it invariably mentions the name 'satan'. This distinction, which is most significant and has been maintained throughout the Quran, i.e. in at least ten places (see 2:35, 37; 7:12, 21; 15:32; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117, 121; 38:75), clearly proves that *Iblīs*, who is mentioned side by side with the angels, is different from the 'satan' who beguiled Adam and was one of Adam's own people to whom Adam was sent as a Reformer.

Thus, *Iblīs* was not one of the angels. This is apparent from the fact that, whereas the angels have been described as being always obedient to God and incapable of disobedience (16:51; 66:7), *Iblīs* has been spoken of as having arrogantly disobeyed a

clear commandment of God (7:12, 13). Elsewhere, the Quran speaks of *Iblīs*, saying: *He (Iblīs) was one of the jinn (a secret creation); then he chose to disobey God's order* (18:51). From the above it is clear that, though not one of the angels, *Iblīs* belonged to a secret creation of God who, unlike the angels, was capable of obeying or disobeying the Lord, as he liked. The Quran further makes it clear that when *Iblīs* insolently disobeyed God, He turned him away and cursed him for his rebellious attitude, whereupon *Iblīs* took the vow that he would thenceforward take to misleading men and hindering them from following the right way (7:17, 18; 15:35, 36, 40; 17:63). Elsewhere the Quran says: *"Then said We to the angels, 'Submit to Adam; and they all submitted. But Iblīs did not; he would not be of those who submit. God said, 'What prevented thee from submitting when I commanded thee'? He said, 'I am better than he. Thou hast created me of fire while him hast Thou created of clay.' God said, 'Then go down hence; it is not for thee to be arrogant here. Get out; thou art certainly of those who are abased.' He said, 'Grant me respite till the day when they will be raised up.' God said, 'Thou shalt be of those who are given respite.' He said. 'Now since Thou hast adjudged me as lost, I will assuredly lie in wait for them on Thy straight path. Then will I surely come upon them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and Thou wilt not find most of them to be grateful.' God said, 'Get*

36. And We said: 'O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in the garden, and eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will, but approach not this tree, lest you be of the wrongdoers.'<sup>42</sup>

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ  
وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا  
هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:20, 23; 20:117, 118.

out hence, despised and banished. Whosoever of them shall follow thee, I will surely fill Hell with you all." (7:12-19). Elsewhere God says to *Iblis*: Surely, thou shalt have no power over My servants except such of the erring ones as choose to follow thee (15:43). At yet another place, God says that *Iblis* was one of the *jinn*, i.e. a secret creation (18:51). And about the *jinn* God says: I have created the *jinn* and men only that they may serve Me. (51:57)

As to the presence of good and evil in the world, it may be said that out of His infinite wisdom God has made man a free agent, giving him the power either to take the right path or be led into the wrong one as he likes. This system in which angels and *Iblis* both take part is quite in the fitness of things and is for man's own good; for without being a free agent man cannot deserve praise or be entitled to reward for his good actions; and if man is to become entitled to reward for good actions, he needs must also be responsible for his sins and shortcomings, because his being a free agent must function both ways.

God has done more. He gives every man a good start in life by giving him a good and virtuous nature, and it is man himself who afterwards spoils

the goodness of his nature and takes an evil course. Says the Holy Prophet: "Every child is born with a good nature (i.e. the nature of Islam); it is his parents who later make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian" (Bukhārī). God further raises Prophets and sends down His revelation for the reformation of mankind so that, if through their own free choice or under the influence of some evil spirits or bad associates, men should go astray, they may thereby be called back to truth. See also note on 'Satan' under 2:37.

#### 42. Important Words:

شجرة (tree) is the singular of شجر (trees). It is derived from the verb شجر. The Arabs say شجر الامر بينهم i.e. the affair or case became complicated and confused so as to be a subject of disagreement and difference between them. شجرة means, a tree, because of the intermixing or confusion of its branches. شجرة also signifies, the stock or origin of a man. They say, هو من شجرة طيبة i.e. he is of a good stock or origin (Lane).

ظالمين (wrongdoers) is the plural of ظالم being derived from ظلم which means: (1) he put a thing in the wrong place or in a place not its own; (2) he made one suffer loss; (3) he

transgressed or committed a wrong. A ظالم is thus one who does an inappropriate or improper thing; or one who commits a wrong; or one who makes someone suffer a loss (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The word جنة (garden) occurring in this verse does not refer to Heaven or Paradise but simply to the garden-like place where Adam was first made to live. It cannot refer to Heaven: *firstly*, because it was on the earth that Adam was made to live, as the words, *I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth*, occurring in 2:31 clearly indicate.

*Secondly*, Heaven is a place from which no one who once enters it will ever be expelled (15:49), whereas Adam was made to quit the جنة (garden) spoken of in this verse. This shows that the جنة or garden in which Adam first dwelt was a place on this very earth which was given this name on account of the fertility of its soil and the abundance of its verdure. Recent researches go to show that the place where Adam was made to dwell was the garden of Eden which lay near Babylon in Iraq or Assyria.

According to the Bible, the forbidden شجرة (tree) was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). But we learn from the Quran that after having eaten of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve became naked which means that, unlike knowledge which is a source of goodness, the tree was a source of evil, making Adam exhibit a weakness. The Quranic view is evidently correct, because to deprive

man of knowledge was to defeat the very purpose for which he had been brought into being. The Quran and the Bible seem, however, to agree on the point that the tree was not a real one, but only a symbol, because no tree with either of the above characteristics, i.e. making a man naked or giving him knowledge of good or evil, exists on the face of the globe. So the tree must represent something else.

As explained above, the word شجرة also means a quarrel. Says the Quran: *But no, by thy Lord, they are not believers until they make thee judge in all that is in dispute between them* (4:66).

Elsewhere, the Quran makes mention of two kinds of شجرة (1) شجرة طيبة (good tree) and (2) شجرة خبيثة (evil tree) for which see 14:25 & 27. Pure things and pure teachings are likened to the former, and impure things and impure thoughts are likened to the latter. In the light of these explanations, the verse would mean: (1) that Adam was enjoined to avoid quarrels; (2) that he was warned against evil things, because although the verse does not specify evil or good, yet the prohibition cannot but refer to impure and evil things.

The expression, *eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will*, indicates that the place where Adam lived had not yet come under the jurisdiction of anybody and was what may be termed "God's land" which was given to Adam who was thus made lord of all he surveyed.

The concluding clause, *lest you be of ظالمين or wrongdoers*, means that the result of approaching the prohibited

37. But <sup>a</sup>"Satan caused them both to slip by means of it and drove them out of *the state* in which they were. And We said: <sup>b</sup>"Go forth; some of you are enemies of others, and <sup>c</sup>for you there is an abode in the earth and a provision for a time.'<sup>43</sup>

فَازْلَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا  
كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ  
لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:21, 28; 20:121. <sup>b</sup>2:62; 7:25; 20:124. <sup>c</sup>7:25, 26; 20:56; 77:26, 27.

شجرة would be that Adam would become one of those who do not observe propriety in their actions for, as explained under Important Words, ظلم means, putting a thing at a wrong place.

### 43. Important Words:

ازل (caused them both to slip). ازل derived from زل i.e. he slipped. ازل means: (1) he caused him to slip; (2) he turned him from the truth or from the right path (Aqrab). The word زل is sometimes used of slipping without intention (Mufradât).

اهبطوا (go forth) is derived from هبط meaning, he descended or alighted or went down. But when the word is followed by the preposition من it generally means, he went forth or he departed. Thus هبط من الوادي means, he went forth from the valley (Baqā). Arabic grammar, however, permits of the preposition being omitted. Thus the word اهبطوا in the present verse would mean, go forth or depart. Further on (in 2:39) we read اهبطوا منها which means, go out of it or go forth from it.

استقر (abode) is derived from استقر which again is derived from قر. They say استقر بالمكان or قر في المكان i.e. he stayed or

became established in the place; he adopted the place as his residence. So مستقر means, a place where one resides or abides for some length of time (Aqrab).

متاع (provision) is derived from متع. They say متعه الله بكذا i.e. God made him profit by it for some length of time. So متاع means: (1) any of the necessities of life like food, clothes and furniture; (2) goods of the world; (3) any short-lived profit that does not last for long (Aqrab). The word also means, deriving benefit from a thing for some length of time (Mufradât).

### Commentary:

The pronoun "it" in, *caused them both to slip by means of it*, evidently refers to the شجرة or tree. The first two clauses of the verse mean that a satanic being enticed Adam and his spouse from the place where they were and thereby deprived them of the comforts they enjoyed. As explained in 2:35 above, it will be noted that he who beguiled and brought trouble on Adam was *Shaitān* and not *Iblīs* who is spoken of as refusing to serve Adam. This

distinction is to be found not only in the verse under comment but throughout the Quran which invariably speaks of *Iblīs* while mentioning the incident of refusal to bow down through pride, and of *Shaiṭān* wherever mention is made of Adam being instigated to eat of the prohibited شجرة (tree). The distinction points to the conclusion that the word *Shaiṭān* does not here refer to *Iblīs*, but to someone from among the fellow beings of Adam who was hostile to him. The inference is further supported by the verse: As to My servants, thou (O Iblis) shalt *certainly have no power over them* (17: 66). As Adam was a vicegerent of God, *Iblīs* could have no power over him, and the being who beguiled him was someone else. Hence, in order to bring out this fact, the word *Shaiṭān*, which has a much wider significance than *Iblīs*, has been used here.

The concluding words of the verse, i.e. *for you there is an abode in the earth*, also prove that the Quran lends no support to the idea of anybody ascending to the heavens alive, for the verse clearly fixes the earth as the lifelong abode of man. Thus the Quran rejects the idea that Jesus or, for that matter, anybody else ever went up to the heavens alive.

A short note here on the word 'satan' will not be out of place. As will be readily seen, the word 'satan' is of much wider significance than *Iblīs*, for whereas *Iblīs* is the name given to the Evil Spirit who belonged to the jinn and refused to serve Adam, thereafter becoming the leader

of the forces of evil in the universe, the word 'satan' is used about any evil or harmful being or thing, whether a spirit or a human being or an animal or a disease or any other thing. Thus *Iblīs* is a 'satan'; his comrades and associates are 'satans'; enemies of truth are 'satans'; mischievous men are 'satans', injurious animals are 'satans' and harmful diseases are 'satans'. The Quran, the Ḥadīth and the Arabic literature are full of instances in which the word 'satan' has been freely used about one or all of these things. Thus the Quran says that there are 'satans' both among men and the jinn (6:113). Again, mischievous enemies of truth are also called 'satans' in the Quran (2:15). The Holy Prophet once used the name 'satan' about a thief who had repeatedly robbed Abū Hurairah (Bukhārī). Similarly the Holy Prophet once said that a black street dog was a 'satan' (Mājah). Again he once ordered his Companions to cover up their utensils containing food and drink lest 'satan' should find its way into them, evidently meaning harmful insects and germs (Mājah). At another place the Holy Prophet exhorts his followers to clean their nostrils when they rise from sleep in the morning as 'satan' rests in them, hinting that harmful matter accumulates in the nostrils which, if not removed, may injure health (Muslim).

From the above instances it is clear that 'satan' is a very general term and is freely used about all evil or harmful beings or things. For the meaning of the word 'satan' see note on 2:15.

38. Then Adam learnt from his Lord <sup>a</sup>certain words of prayer. So <sup>b</sup>He turned towards him with mercy; Surely, He is Oft-Returning with compassion, and is Merciful.<sup>44</sup>

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ<sup>ط</sup>  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ<sup>٣٨</sup>

<sup>a</sup>7:24. <sup>b</sup>20:123.

#### 44. Important Words:

تلقى (learnt) is derived from لقي. They say لقي فلانا i.e. he came face to face with him; he met him or he saw him; he found him. لقي الشيء means, he threw or pushed the thing towards him; he made him meet it or he made him experience it. القاه means, he threw it or put it or let it fall. القا اليه القول means, he told or communicated to him the word. القا عليه رحمته means, he bestowed his mercy on him. تلقى الشيء means, he came face to face with it; or he met it or saw it. تلقى منه الشيء means, he received the thing from him; or he learnt it from him (Aqrab).

كلمات (words) is, like كلم, the plural of كلمة which is derived from the verb كلم. They say كلمه meaning, he wounded him; كلمه (Kallamahū) means, he wounded him; he spoke to him. كلمه means, he spoke to him; the latter expression being generally used of two or more persons speaking to one another. تكلم means, he spoke, he uttered words. كلام means, saying or speech having some meaning; idea occurring in the mind even if it is not expressed; a writing. كلمة means, word; anything uttered; speech (Aqrab). كلمة also means, a decree; a commandment (Mufradāt).

تاب (he turned) and تواب (Oft-

Returning) are both derived from the same root. تاب means, he repented. تاب الى الله means, he returned to God with repentance after being disobedient or sinful. تاب الله عليه means, God turned to him with forgiveness and mercy. تائب means, one who repents or turns towards God after being disobedient or sinful. توبة means, repentance; turning towards God for forgiveness with the resolve to be obedient and righteous in future. تواب is intensive adjective from تاب. When applied to man it means, one who is always ready to repent, one who turns to God much for forgiveness and with promise to reform. When applied to God, it means, He Who is ready to accept repentance; He Who turns (much and often) with forgiveness and mercy towards His servants (Aqrab & Lane).

#### Commentary:

This verse tells us that when 'Satan' deceived Adam, and God informed him of his mistake, he prayed to God for forgiveness in words which he learnt from God Himself. These words have been mentioned by the Quran elsewhere and they run thus: *Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost (7:24).*

39. We said, 'Go forth, all of you, from here. And if <sup>a</sup>there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them *shall come* no fear, nor shall they grieve.'<sup>45</sup>

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ  
مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ تَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ  
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:36; 20:124.

This was the prayer that Adam learnt from God. The prayer was heard and Adam was forgiven. The fact that God Himself taught Adam the words of this prayer shows that he was a chosen one of God and was a recipient of divine revelation. The verse also tells us that on special occasions, God Himself teaches His servants the words in which they should pray to Him, and it is evident that the words of prayer chosen by God are sure to find ready acceptance with Him. It is in fact a way of honouring holy men and expediting their reconciliation with Him that God sometimes teaches them the words in which they should pray to Him. It is, in other words, saying to them, "Come to Me with a request and I will grant it." Strange indeed are the ways of the Lord Whose mercy and forgiveness are, as it were, always eager to descend on man, if he only cares to turn towards Him with repentance. Says the Holy Prophet, "God has spoken to me saying: Whoso does a good deed will have a tenfold reward and even more, and whoso does an evil deed will have a punishment only equal to it or will have his sin forgiven altogether. And whoso approaches Me by half a cubit, I will go to him by one cubit and

whoso approaches Me by one cubit, I will go to him by four cubits; and whoso comes to Me walking, I will go to him running" (Muslim).

#### 45. Important Words:

خَوْف (fear) is derived from خَاف i.e. he feared. خَوْف denotes fear about the future. يَحْزَنُونَ (shall grieve) is derived from حَزَن which means, he felt regret, grief, and sorrow. حَزَن means, he made him sorrowful. حُزْن (grief) generally, though not always, relates to what is past.

#### Commentary:

As Adam was to become the progenitor of a great race and the harbinger of a new era, a timely announcement was made to mankind through him that they should be prepared to receive guidance from their God from time to time. Thus the verse holds out the promise that among the descendants of Adam there would continue to appear great souls who would invite people to truth and guidance, and that those who followed such holy persons would attain salvation. Their hearts would be so filled with the true faith that they would enjoy peace and tranquillity of mind in all circumstances. No fear about the



40. But <sup>a</sup>they who will disbelieve and treat Our Signs as lies, these shall be the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.<sup>46</sup>

**R. 5.**

41. O children of Israel! <sup>b</sup>remember My favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you, and Me alone should you fear.<sup>47</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ  
أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

يٰٓبَنِي إِسْرَآءِ ۚ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي  
أَنعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفِ  
بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَآيَآيَ فَاَرْهَبُون ۚ ﴿٤٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:37. <sup>b</sup>2:48, 123; 5:21; 14:7.

future or regret about the past would trouble them, as they would attain nearness to God and their hearts would be to them a paradise.

**46. Important Words:**

خالدون (shall abide). For the meaning of خلود see under 2:26.

**Commentary:**

Along with the glad tidings given in the preceding verse, a warning is issued in the present verse for such people as might reject God's guidance. They will fall into a fire and will never enjoy inner happiness and satisfaction of mind, however rich and wealthy they may happen to be. In the next world too, both those who follow the guidance and those who reject it will have the reward and retribution of their deeds.

The last clause of the verse, viz. هم فيها خالدون i.e. *therein they shall abide*, does not mean that they will remain in Hell forever. Islam does not believe in the eternity of Hell, but looks upon it as a sort of hospital

where men will be sent for treatment and cure. The God of Islam is most merciful and not vindictive, and does not delight in inflicting punishment on His creatures. On the other hand, His punishment comes only when it becomes absolutely essential and even then, it is intended only for the reformation of His creatures. The punishment, whether of this world or of the next, is not based on the motive of revenge, but both here and hereafter, its underlying purpose is to inflict pain with the ultimate object of healing and curing, so that when this purpose has been fulfilled, it will become unnecessary and will be stopped. Accordingly, Islam teaches that there will come a time when the dwellers of Hell, after having been cured of their spiritual diseases, will leave it for Heaven (see under 11:108, 109). In contrast to this, the reward of Heaven is truly everlasting (11:109).

**47. Important Words:**

اسرائيل (Israel) is another name of

Jacob, son of Isaac. This name was bestowed by God on Jacob later in life (Gen. 32:28). The original Hebrew word is a compound one made up of *يسرا* and *ايل* and means: (a) God's prince; (b) God's warrior; (c) God's soldier (Concordance by Cruden and Hebrew-English Lexicon by W. Gesenius). The name Israel is used to convey three different senses: (1) Jacob personally (Gen. 32:28); (2) progeny of Jacob (Deut. 6:3, 4); (3) any righteous and God-fearing person or people (Hebrew-English Lexicon).

*اذكروا* (remember) is derived from *ذكر* meaning: (1) he spoke of (2) he remembered, i.e. called to mind; (3) he kept in memory. Thus *ذكر* (remembrance) may either be with the tongue or with the mind or heart (Aqrab & Mufradât).

*عهد* (covenant). The word *عهد* gives a number of meanings. *عهدا اليه* means, he enjoined him; he put on him a responsibility; he made a covenant with him. *عهدا الحرمه* means, he observed and protected the sanctity of a thing. *عهد زيدا بمكان كذا* means, he met Zaid at such and such a place. *العهد* means, an injunction; a commandment; a responsibility; a covenant; a promise; fulfilment of a promise; an oath; observance of the sanctity of a thing; protection; meeting with a person or thing; etc. (Lane & Aqrab). In the present verse *عهدي* does not mean, My part of the covenant, because the Israelites could not be asked to fulfil what God had promised. It means, the covenant you made with Me. Similarly *عهدكم* means, My covenant with you and not your covenant with Me.

*فارهبون* (Me should you fear) is really a combination of three words, i.e. *ن*

(so) and *ارهبوا* (you should fear) and *ن* (Me), the last named being originally *ني*. Added to the preceding word *إيائي* (Me) the clause receives a sort of triple emphasis.

### Commentary:

In the preceding verse the Quran, by a reference to Adam, draws the reader's attention to the fact that God has been sending down His revelation from the very beginning and that evil-minded people have always opposed such revelation and that thus the Quranic revelation and the hostility of some people towards it are not to be wondered at.

In the present verse God addresses the Israelites in order to point to the fact that the revelation has not been confined to the beginning of the world but has been sent down repeatedly, as and when required, and that a very good example of this repetition is to be met with in the history of the Israelites. Side by side with this reference to the Israelites, it is also pointed out that even the Israelites have now lost God's favour by failing to fulfil His covenant and that God has, therefore, now decided to choose a new people for His favour. Another reason why the Israelites have been mentioned here is that, being the last people to receive the favours of God before Islam, they are more answerable to Him than any other people.

As to the question that naturally arises here, why God addresses the Jews in this verse as "the children of Israel" and not as "the children of Jacob" or simply as "the Jews", it may be stated that Israel, being the

name given to Jacob by God Himself, has been preferred to the name Jacob which was apparently given him by his parents. Moreover, Israel, being an attributive name meaning "God's warrior", has been chosen to remind the Jews that, being the children of a great soldier of God, they should also behave like brave men and, throwing aside all petty considerations, should come forward and accept the Prophet whom God has raised for their own good. The form يا بني اسرائيل (O ye children of Israel), is similar to addressing a man as يا ابن الكريم (O you the son of a noble man), which expression we use when we wish to appeal to him to show nobility and generosity just as his noble father before him used to do.

As to the other name "Jews", it may be noted that both "Israel" and "Jews" are attributive names which have come to be used as proper names. Where the Quran desires to refer to the followers of Moses as a community descended from one common ancestor, it speaks of them as "children of Israel", and where it desires to refer to them as a religious unit it uses the name "Jews", the word يهود or هود derived from هار meaning a people that turn to God or to the truth with repentance. Or, as some people have thought, يهود is derived from (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As Judah's descendants together with those of his brother, Benjamin, constituted the kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem, as opposed to that of the remaining ten tribes of Israel, collectively known as Israel, and, as Jerusalem became the religious centre of the Jews, the Jewish religion came

to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as يهود or Jews (Enc. Brit. under Jews).

The "favours" spoken of in the verse include both spiritual and temporal favours, of both of which the Israelites had their share. Says the Quran: *And remember when Moses said to his people, 'O my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings' (5:21).* This verse makes it clear that the highest spiritual favour is prophethood and the highest temporal favour is kingship and both these favours were bestowed on the Israelites. The facts of history bear out that assertion.

The words اوفوا بعهدى اوت بعهدكم have been rendered in the text as, *fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you*, but perhaps a simpler rendering would be, "fulfil My commandments, I will fulfil the promise I made to you". As for the covenant spoken of in this verse, we read in the Quran that, when Abraham enquired of God whether the promise which He had made to him about making him an Imām or leader of the people applied to his posterity also, God said, *My covenant does not embrace the transgressors (2:125)* which implied that the covenant applied only to the righteous children of Abraham.

The Bible also refers to this covenant in Gen. 17:4-14 where God says to Abraham, "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations...And I will make thee exceeding fruitful and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come

out of thee...This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you...And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The circumcision here spoken of is treated as a symbol of spiritual purification in the Scriptures (Lev. 26:41 & Jer. 4:3, 4; 9:25). The Jews retained the outward form of the rite of circumcision but neglected the inner spirit, while Christians neglected both.

After Abraham the covenant was renewed with the Israelites. This second covenant is mentioned in the Bible in several places (Exod. 20; Deut. Chaps. 5, 18, 26). God gave Moses on Mount Sinai (or Horeb as it is called in Deut.) the Ten Commandments and made a covenant with the Israelites (Deut. 5:2, 3). They were commanded to keep this covenant thus: "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you and that ye may prolong your days in the land ye shall possess" (Deut. 5:33). And again "Thou (O Israel!) hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgements, and to hearken unto His voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people as He has promised thee, and that thou shouldst

keep all His commandments" (Deut. 26:17, 18).

When the covenant was being made and the glory of God was manifesting itself on Mount Sinai, the Israelites were so terrified to see "the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking" (Exod. 20:18) that accompanied this manifestation that they exclaimed to Moses, saying: "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. 20:19). These words sealed the fate of the Israelites; for thereupon God said to Moses that, though the Israelites would be blessed as long as they acted upon the commandments revealed through him, in future no Law-giving Prophet, just as he was, would appear among them. Such a Prophet—a Law-giving Prophet like unto him—would in future appear from among the brethren of the Israelites, i.e. the Ishmaelites. Says Moses: "And the Lord said unto me, they have well-spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him (Deut. 18:18, 19).

In the foregoing verses, the Israelites are told that as they themselves refused to listen to the word of God, the next Law-giving Prophet will be raised not from among them, but from among their brethren. Prophets were indeed raised

among the Israelites even after Moses as the Quran itself testifies (2:88), but the Prophet that was to be "like Moses", i.e. a Law-giving Prophet, was not raised from among them in accordance with the prophecy quoted above.

The prophecy clearly stated that the next Law-giving Prophet was to be from among the "brethren" of the Israelites. Now as the Ishmaelites are the "brethren" of the Israelites, it was from among them that the Holy Prophet of Islam appeared. This is quite in conformity with the promise which was first made to Abraham himself (2:130).

It is wrong to say that the words "of thy brethren" may refer to the Israelites themselves; for at the time of Moses all the tribes of Israel were living together, and if the Promised Prophet was to appear from among them, it could in no sense be right to say that the Lord would raise up a Prophet from among the "brethren" of the Israelites. Neither can the prophecy apply to Jesus who, besides not being a Law-giving Prophet (Matt. 5:17, 18), was an Israelite and not an Ishmaelite. The prophecy was clearly fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of Arabia, who was an Ishmaelite and, like Moses, a Law-giving Prophet.

It has been objected that elsewhere the Bible speaking of this prophecy, uses the words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren," which shows that the words apply to the Israelites themselves. But this inference is clearly wrong; for, *firstly* the words "from the midst of thee" are not God's words but only those of Moses (Deut. 18:15), whereas the words

"from among thy brethren" are God's own words (Deut. 18:18); and as the prophecy is based on God's revelation and not on Moses' interpretation, the former must be assumed to be more correct. *Secondly*, even if we take the words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren," to be correctly based on God's revelation, then also these words may be taken to apply to the Holy Prophet of Islam, for he, having been sent to all nations, may truly be looked upon as having been raised amidst each and every people of the world. In this case the words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren" would be interpreted to give a twofold meaning: (1) that the Promised Prophet would be raised for all the nations of the world, including the Israelites; and (2) that personally he would belong to the Ishmaelites.

As the Jews repeatedly broke God's covenant, it was transferred to the Holy Prophet and his followers. Says God in the Quran: (Moses prayed to God, saying,) *Ordain for us good in this world, as well as in the next; we have turned to Thee with repentance. God replied, I will inflict My punishment on whom I will; but My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it for those who act righteously, and pay the Zakāh and those who believe in Our Signs—those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, the immaculate one, whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel which are with them* (7:157, 158).

The mention of the Holy Prophet in the Bible is to be found in Deut. 18 wherein the Israelites are exhorted to

accept the Promised Prophet so that they may receive mercy.

Again, the Quran says: *And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets: Saying, whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him, and He said, Do you agree and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter? They said, We agree; He said, Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses (3:82).*

From what has been said above it is clear that in the words, *and fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you*, God reminds the children of Israel that He had made a covenant with Isaac and his seed after him to the effect that if they fulfilled their covenant with Him and obeyed all His behests, He would continue to bestow His favours on them; but if they did not fulfil their covenant, they would be deprived of His favours. Now as the Israelites utterly failed to keep the covenant, God raised the Promised Prophet from among the Ishmaelites as He had already promised, and henceforth the covenant was transferred to the followers of the new Prophet. He who obeyed the new Prophet would prosper; he who rejected him would be cut off.

The words, *fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you*, also lead to an important inference. The greatest favour bestowed by God upon the Israelites in fulfilment of His covenant with

them was the gift of prophecy. They were given a Law in the form of the Torah, but this did not put an end to the appearance of Prophets among them who continued to come even after Moses. These Prophets brought no new Law but they received divine revelation and breathed a new life into their people. The Quran also refers to this favour of God upon the Israelites (5:21). Now in the verse under comment, God holds out the promise to the Israelites that if they fulfilled their part of the covenant and believed in the Holy Prophet of Islam, He would fulfil His part, i.e. continue to bestow the gift of prophecy on them as He had done in the past. This could be done only by raising from among them such Prophets as brought no new Law but simply came to serve the Law of Islam. From this it clearly follows that even in the new Dispensation inaugurated by the Holy Prophet, the gift of prophethood is still open; if it were not open, the promise of God that if the Israelites believed in the new Dispensation, the same favours which were bestowed on them in the past would be bestowed on them in the future could not hold true.

From the above it is also clear that the prophethood promised in Islam is to be like that of the Prophets who came after Moses. The latter were not Law-bearing Prophets, but simply came to serve the Law of Moses. Similarly, the prophethood promised in Islam is not to be a Law-bearing prophethood but simply a prophethood meant for the service of the Quran (See also under 1:7).

The concluding words, *and Me*

42. And believe in what I have sent <sup>a</sup>which fulfils that which is with you, and be not the <sup>b</sup>first to disbelieve therein, and <sup>c</sup>barter not My Signs for a paltry price, and take protection in Me alone.<sup>48</sup>

وَأْمُوا بِمَا أَنزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ  
وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا  
بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ وَإِيَّاي فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٤٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:90, 98, 102; 3:4, 82; 4:48; 5:49. <sup>b</sup>7:102; 10:75. <sup>c</sup>2:80, 175; 3:200; 5:45; 9:9; 16:96.

*alone should you fear*, are at once a warning and an appeal to the Jews. As explained under Important Words, this clause contains triple emphasis and means somewhat like this, "Fear Me alone; beware, and fear Me alone." The Israelites had already incurred God's anger by repeatedly breaking their covenant with Him. Now was a last chance for them, so let them fear the Lord even now and accept the new Prophet whose acceptance can yet turn the scales in their favour. It was a case of now or never.

In this connection it may also be noted that the above expression, i.e. *and Me alone should you fear*, has not been used to signify that God is something to be feared. The emphasis is rather on the fact that nothing except God should be feared. Islam roots out all fears except that of God. Indeed, he who fears anybody or anything except God is not a true believer.

#### 48. Important Words:

صدق (fulfilling) is derived from صدق meaning, he told the truth or he was true. صدقه (*saddaqaḥū*) means, he held or declared him or it to be true. صدق زيد خالد means, Zaid said or held that what Khālid had said was true (Aqrab

& Lane). The word تصديق when used about previous Prophets or previous Scriptures can possibly signify three things: (1) that the claim of the previous Prophets and the previous Books about their divine mission or Divine origin is true; (2) that the teachings which they gave were true; and (3) that the prophecies which they made about the coming of some future Prophet or future revelation, etc., were true. Now the Quran and the Holy Prophet were مصدق of the previous Books and the previous Prophets in all these three senses: (1) Islam declares that all previous Prophets and all previous Books that claimed divine mission or Divine origin and were believed in as such by a large number of people, were indeed from God (2:5; 2:286); (2) it admits that the teachings of the previous Prophets and the previous Books were true, not necessarily in the form in which they existed at the time of its advent but in the form in which they were originally given (98:4); (3) it claims that the prophecies made by previous Books and the previous Prophets about the coming of a Prophet and the coming of a Book of divine law were true and have been fulfilled in the Quran and

the Holy Prophet of Islam. In the verse under comment the word مصدق is used in the last-mentioned sense, i.e. fulfilling the prophecies of the previous Scriptures.

Moreover, the word مصدق is here followed by the preposition لام and not با and there is a difference between simple مصدق and مصدق به and مصدق له. When the word is used in the sense of holding a thing to be true, it is either followed by no preposition or is followed by the preposition با. When, however, the Quran uses the word in the sense of fulfilling, it is followed by the preposition لام. Even in common parlance we say جئت تصديقا لقول فلان i.e. I have come in accordance with, or to fulfil, the word of such a person.

The use of the word مصدق له in the Quran practically bears out this distinction. For instance, in 2:92 the Quran says: *And when it is said to them, 'Believe in what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us'; and they disbelieve in what has been sent down after that, yet it is the truth, fulfilling that which is with them.* This verse makes it absolutely clear what the word مصدق means when followed by the preposition لام. It undoubtedly means "fulfilling" and not "confirming" or "declaring to be true". The expression in the verse quoted above has been used as a proof of the truth of the Quran and this clearly proves that this expression (i.e. مصدق له) conveys the sense of "fulfilling", not that of "confirming"; for if a book declares the Bible to be true, that is no proof of the book being itself a revealed word of God; even an impostor can

declare the previous Scriptures to be true. It is only the fulfilling of the prophecies contained in the Bible that can serve as an evidence of the truth of the Quran. Thus it is clear that when the Quran speaks of its being مصدق (used with the preposition لام) of the Christian and the Jewish scriptures, it uses the word in the sense of "fulfilling" and not in the sense of "declaring to be true".

Again in 35:32 we find the same expression definitely used in the sense of 'fulfilling'. The verse runs thus: *And the Book which We have revealed to thee is the truth itself, fulfilling (مصدقاً) that which is before it,* i.e. fulfilling the Scriptures that have gone before it. Now in this verse مصدق cannot mean 'declaring to be true'; for in that case we shall have to admit that the Quran declares all the teachings contained in previous Scriptures to be true, whereas many of these Scriptures are contradictory of one another and all of them contain at least some teachings that are opposed to the teachings of the Quran. So if the expression مصدقاً له means "declaring to be true", it would signify that the Quran declares not only all the mutually contradictory Scriptures to be true, but also such teachings as are opposed to its own teaching. From this it is clear that the expression مصدقاً له can only signify that the Quran fulfils the prophecies that were contained in the previous Scriptures regarding the advent of a Law-giving Prophet and a universal Dispensation.

لا تشتروا (barter not). For the meaning of the word اشتري see note under 2:17.



**Commentary:**

The verse under comment is a fitting complement of what has been said in the previous verse. God, the Almighty, calls upon the Israelites to accept the Holy Prophet of Islam in whom the prophecies contained in their Scriptures have been fulfilled. In fact, all the previous Scriptures had prophesied about the advent of a great Prophet. The Quran itself refers to this fact where it says: *And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets, saying, 'Whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom, and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him, and help him'. And He said, 'Do you agree and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter?' They said, 'We agree;' He said, 'Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses'* (3:82). In this verse we have been told that every previous Prophet informed his people of the advent of a great Prophet and enjoined them to accept him when he made his appearance. As, before Islam, different Prophets were sent to different peoples, and it was only with the advent of Islam that there was to come a Prophet for all mankind, it was necessary that a covenant should have been taken from all the different peoples binding them to accept the World-Prophet when he appeared.

The advent of such a Prophet who was to gather together all nations was announced in Isaiah 42:1-4 in the

following words:

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgement to the nations. He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgement in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth" (Revised Version). Again, in Isaiah 55:4 we read: "Behold, I have given him for witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples" (Revised Version). Compare this with the Quran where God addresses the Holy Prophet, saying: *And how will it fare with them when We shall bring a witness from every people, and shall bring thee as a witness against these* (4:42). The above quoted prophecy mentioned in Isaiah cannot be supposed to refer to Jesus, for he did not claim to have been sent to all peoples. Says Jesus, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15: 24).

In Isaiah 60:5-7, we read:

"Then thou shalt see and be lightened, and thine heart shall tremble and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;

they all shalt come from Sheba: They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory" (Revised Version). On this point the Quran says regarding Pilgrimage to Mecca: *And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage; they shall come to thee on foot, and on every lean camel emaciated on account of coming through every deep and distant track* (22:28).

Now is there any House, except the one at Mecca, to which people repair riding on camels and where they offer sacrifices?

Add to the above prophecies those already given under the previous verse e.g. the prophecy relating to the coming of a Prophet from among the "brethren" of the Israelites, etc., and the reader will at once realize that the Bible did contain prophecies about the advent of a great Prophet who was to gather together all nations, and that these prophecies have been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The words, *and be not the first to disbelieve therein*, occurring in the verse under comment call upon the Israelites to ponder over the claim of the Holy Prophet and not to be hasty in rejecting it. They have been cautioned against being hasty in rejecting the truth, for once a man rejects the truth without giving it calm and dispassionate consideration,

it becomes very difficult for him to accept it afterwards. He becomes prejudiced against it. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it says: *And We shall confound their hearts and their eyes, as they believed not therein at the first time and We shall leave them in their transgression to wander in distraction* (6:111).

These words also hint at the fact that the People of the Book, being in possession of divine prophecies bearing on the advent of a great Prophet from among the descendants of Ishmael, are better fitted than others to judge of the truth of the Holy Prophet of Islam and should therefore be the first to accept him; at least they should not go to the other extreme and be the first to reject him.

The words, *and barter not My Signs for a paltry price*, are explained in the Quran in 4:78: *Say, The benefit of this world is little*. Interpreted in this light the verse would mean "Do not forsake the truth for worldly gains," for worldly gains, however big, are but a small and passing thing when compared with the gains of the Hereafter. These words may also be interpreted to signify that people who reject the truth may secure only temporary gains, but eventually, even in this life, the tide very often turns, bringing the righteous ones in ascendance.

The concluding words, *and take protection in Me alone*, are similar in construction to those placed at the end of the preceding verse, the only difference being that here the word *ترهبون* has been replaced by the word

43. And <sup>a</sup>confound not truth with falsehood <sup>b</sup>nor hide the truth, knowingly.<sup>49</sup>

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا  
الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:72. <sup>b</sup>2:147, 160; 6:92.

تتقون which gives a much wider significance than the former. For an explanation of the word تقوى see under 2:3 above.

Before we pass on to the next verse, it is necessary to remove one possible misunderstanding. The Quran declares itself to be <sup>مصدق له</sup> of the Jewish scriptures and we have explained this expression as meaning that the Quran came in fulfilment of what was prophesied in the previous Scriptures—not that the Quran holds the previous Scriptures to be true. This should not give rise to the misunderstanding that the Quran does not accept the Divine origin of the previous Scriptures. As a matter of fact, the Quran itself says that God's Messengers have appeared among all the different peoples of the world (35:25). It also calls upon its followers to believe in all the previous revelations but this belief should be through the Holy Prophet and not independently of him (2:5). At the same time, the Quran criticizes and denies several teachings ascribed to the previous Scriptures and claims that these teachings have been tampered with (19:89-92; 9:30; 4:47). Thus the position may be summed up as follows:

(1) Wherever the Quran speaks of itself as being <sup>مصدق له</sup> of the previous Scriptures, it does not mean that it confirms their teachings but that it

claims to have come in fulfilment of their prophecies.

(2) Nevertheless the Quran accepts the Divine origin of all the revealed Books that were sent by God before Islam.

(3) But it does not look upon all their present teachings to be true; for much has been tampered with and much that was meant for a specific period has now become obsolete.

#### 49. Important Words:

<sup>لا تلبسوا</sup> (confound) is derived from <sup>لبس</sup> which means, he put on a clothing. And as a clothing serves to cover or hide the body of the person clothed, the word has also come to mean, to cover up or to hide or to confound or to make a thing mixed up or doubtful (Aqrab).

<sup>الباطل</sup> (falsehood) is derived from <sup>بطل</sup> which means: (1) it became corrupt, or (2) it became inoperative, or (3) it went waste and served no useful purpose. The Arabs use the expression <sup>بطل دمه</sup> of a murdered person whose blood is not avenged. The word <sup>باطل</sup> means: (1) anything opposed to <sup>حق</sup> (truth) i.e. falsehood; (2) anything that goes waste and serves no useful purpose; (3) an obsolete edict or commandment which is no longer operative (Aqrab & Mufradât).

#### Commentary:

Here the Jews are forbidden (1) to mingle the true with the false, by

44. And <sup>a</sup>observe Prayer and <sup>b</sup>pay the Zakāh, and bow down with those who bow.<sup>50</sup> وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:4. <sup>b</sup>2:84, 111, 178; 4:163; 5:56; 9:11; 21:74; 23:5.

quoting verses from their Scriptures and putting wrong interpretations on them; and (2) to suppress or hide the truth i.e. suppress such prophecies in their Scriptures as refer to the Promised Prophet.

### 50. Important Words:

زكاة (Zakāh) is derived from زكا i.e. he or it grew or increased or became good or purified, etc. So literally زكاة signifies: (1) increase or augmentation; (2) purification (Lane). Technically, it signifies the obligatory alms prescribed by Islam. (See note on 9:60). زكاة is so called because it results in the purification of the property from which it is given and also in its increase through God's blessing (Mufradāt).

ركع (bow down) is derived from رَكَعَ which means, he bowed down. رَكَعَ إِلَى اللَّهِ means, he leaned towards God and found peace of mind in Him. رَكَعَ الْمَصَلَّى means, the worshipper performed the bowing posture. رَكَعَ in his Prayer, i.e. assumed the bowing posture. رَاكِع means, one who bows down before God or leans towards Him (Lisān & Aqrab). The Arabs used the word رَاكِع for one who worshipped God alone to the exclusion of idols (Asās). A well-known pre-Islamic poet Nābighah says:

سَيَبْلُغُ عَذْرَاؤُنَا حَامِنِ امْرِءٍ إِلَى رَبِّهِ رَبِّ الْبَرِيَّةِ رَاكِعِ

viz. He who is رَاكِع i.e. who turns to

God alone, the Creator of the world, will have a good argument in his favour and will obtain salvation.

### Commentary:

In this verse the Jews are called upon to undergo a complete transformation and identify themselves with Islam not only in belief but also in practice. Only a perfect conversion can save them.

The expression, *bow down with those who bow*, does not mean that the Jews should bow down as in daily Prayers; for that would be redundant, as the performance of the prescribed daily Prayers has already been mentioned in the words اقيموا الصلوة. The expression therefore means that they should completely submit to God, severing all such connections as may lead them astray from Him.

The question here arises, why does not God say "bow down with the believers or the Muslims" which would have been a much simpler construction than *bow down with those who bow*. The answer is that this construction has been adopted to convince the Jews that this commandment of God is not an arbitrary one but is meant for their own good, because by obeying it they would be identifying themselves with a righteous people. The word الرَّاكِعِينَ being an attributive word also

45. "Do you enjoin others to do what is good and forget your own selves, while you read the Book? Will you not then understand?<sup>51</sup>

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ  
أَنفُسَكُمْ وَ أَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ  
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

<sup>51</sup>26:227; 61:3, 4.

supplies an argument which the use of a proper name could not do. Moreover, by the use of this word, God has bestowed well-merited praise on the Muslims. They are, as a community, a *راعي* people, wholly devoted to the service of the One God, having severed all connections with false deities. This extra significance could not have been secured by the use of the word *Muslim* or *Mu'min* which have come to be regarded as more or less proper names.

### 51. Important Words:

*نسى* (forget) is derived from *نسى* meaning: (1) he forgot; (2) he ignored; (3) he left off a thing (Aqrab).

*تعقلون* (you understand) is derived from *عقل* meaning: (1) he understood; (2) he realized his mistake. *عقل الغلام* means, the boy reached the age of puberty. *عقل البعير* means, he tied up the camel with a piece of rope. Thus *عقل* also embodies the sense of restraining (Aqrab).

*بر* (good) means, acting well towards relations and others; truthfulness; fidelity; righteousness; obedience; obedience to God (Aqrab). It also means, extensive goodness or beneficence (Mufradât).

### Commentary:

The Quran questions the Jews, as if

saying: Do you enjoin men to practise extensive beneficence, to deal kindly with one another, to be truthful, to act righteously and to serve and obey God, yet you neglect your own selves, while you claim to read the Book sent by God? Again, your Book contains prophecies concerning the Holy Prophet of Islam, yet you do not accept him. Thus you break a great commandment of the Lord but bid others to observe lesser commandments. Will you not then understand? The word 'Book' here refers to the Bible, but the clause, *while you read the Book*, does not imply that all the contents of the Bible have been admitted to be true and indisputable. The words have been used with the object of bringing home to the Jews the fact that while they think they are the People of the Book, they behave like ignorant men. Should the People of the Book behave as they behave?

The words, *do you enjoin others to do what is good and forget your own selves*, may be interpreted in another way also. As explained under Important Words, the word means, acting well towards relations. The Jews are thus invited to ponder over the fact whether they have acted well towards their brethren, the

46. And <sup>a</sup>seek help with patience and Prayer; and <sup>b</sup>this indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit,<sup>52</sup>

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ۖ وَإِنَّهَا  
لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ۝

<sup>a</sup>2:154; 7:129. <sup>b</sup>4:143; 9:54.

Ishmaelites? They went about enjoining others to act kindly towards relations but for more than two thousand years they themselves acted most shamefully towards their own kinsmen, and their rejection of the Holy Prophet was also due to the jealousy they bore towards the house of Ishmael.

### 52. Important Words:

صبر (patience) means: (1) to steadily adhere to what reason and law command; (2) to restrain oneself from what reason and law forbid; and (3) to restrain oneself from manifesting grief, agitation and impatience, the word being the contrary of جزع i.e. manifestation of grief and agitation (Mufradāt).

خاشعين (the humble) is the plural of خاشع which is derived from خشع which means, he became lowly, humble or submissive; he exercised restraint over himself; he confided in God only, throwing himself completely at His mercy (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lisān). The verse that follows explains what God here means by the word خاشعين.

### Commentary:

This verse along with the one that follows may be taken to be addressed either to the Jews or to the Muslims. In the former case, it constitutes a

continuation of the address to the Israelites, meaning that the Israelites should not be hasty in rejecting the Holy Prophet but should seek to find out the truth with patience and prayer. The verse, however, ends with an expression of the fear that, as seeking to find out the truth in the aforesaid manner is difficult, the Jews perhaps will not resort to the method which only the humble adopt. Or it may be taken to be addressed to Muslims. When the Quran recounted so many hostile activities of Jews against Muslims, it was natural that the weak-minded people among the latter should begin to entertain fear of the Jews. So, as necessitated by the psychological effect of the verses on the listeners, the Quran here turns to the Muslims and gives them a message of hope and encouragement. If Muslims acted with صبر and الصلوة (patience and prayer), they need have no fear. In other words, if they abstain from evils, and practise virtue and be steadfast and observe patience and constantly pray to God for help, He will certainly send them His help, and they will conquer all opposition.

The pronoun in the words, *this indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit*, refers either to الصلوة or to استعانة derived from the word استعينوا meaning, that the act of seeking God's help through صبر and الصلوة is not

47. Who know for certain that<sup>a</sup> they will meet their Lord, and that to Him will they return.<sup>53</sup>

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ  
وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

#### R. 6.

48. O children of Israel!  
<sup>b</sup>remember My favours which I bestowed upon you and that <sup>c</sup>I exalted you above all peoples.<sup>54</sup>

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي  
أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى  
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:224, 250; 11:30; 18:111; 29:6; 84:7. <sup>b</sup>See 2:41. <sup>c</sup>2:123; 3:34; 5:21; 6:87; 7:141; 45:17.

an easy affair. It requires not only a righteous spirit but also one of complete restraint and trust.

#### 53. Important Words:

يَظُنُّونَ (know for certain) is derived from ظن which expresses two contrary meanings, sometimes implying doubt and uncertainty, and sometimes certainty and knowledge (Aqrah). Evidently, it is in the latter sense that the word has been used in this verse.

#### Commentary:

This verse explains the word خَاشِعِينَ (the humble) occurring in the preceding verse. God says that in His sight خَاشِعِينَ are those people who have complete faith in Him and are sure of meeting Him one day. Such people have the strength of their conviction and do not falter before opposition.

The words, *they will meet their Lord*, refer to the meeting with God which holy men enjoy in this life, while the words, *to Him will they return*, refer to the complete nearness to God which such men will attain in the life to come.

#### 54. Commentary:

This verse is clearly addressed to

the Jews. God here introduces the previous subject with a repetition of the words, *O children of Israel, remember My favours*, occurring in verse 41 above. But the words are not truly a repetition; for they are followed by others which do not form part of verse 41. Thus the verse under comment serves to introduce a new point. In the earlier verse the reference in the word "favours" is to the covenant between God and the Jews, whereas the reference in the verse under comment is to the fact that God exalted the Israelites above other peoples.

In the verse under comment the Israelites are reminded that God had fulfilled His promise to them, but as they had, on their part, failed to fulfil their covenant, He had withheld from them the blessing which He had been conferring on them before. The Promised Prophet from among their brethren had come and God's covenant had been transferred to a new people. So they had no ground for complaint.

The words, *I exalted you above all peoples*, do not mean that the

49. And fear the day when no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, "nor shall intercession be accepted for it; nor shall ransom be taken from it; nor shall they be helped.<sup>55</sup>

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ<sup>٥٩</sup>

<sup>٥٩</sup>2:124, 256; 19:88; 20:110; 21:29; 34:24; 39:45; 43:87; 53:27; 74:49.

Israelites are superior to all peoples who have ever dwelt or will ever dwell on this planet. Such a meaning is inconsistent with other passages of the Quran. For instance, in 3:34 it is said: *Allah did choose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all peoples*. As there can be only one people who can have superiority over all other peoples in the true sense of the term, evidently the word *عالمين* (peoples) here signifies peoples of that age only.

Where the Quran desires to convey the idea of real superiority over all nations, it uses other expressions. For instance, the Quran addresses the Muslims in the words: *You are the best people raised for the good of mankind* (3:111). Here the Muslims are definitely spoken of as the best nation that has ever been brought forth for the good of the world.

### 55. Important Words:

*تجزى* (shall serve as a substitute) is derived from *جزى* which means, he or it sufficed; he rendered satisfaction; he paid; he requited or recompensed. The expression *جزى هذا من هذا* or *جزى هذا عن هذا* means, this stood in the place of that, or this served as a substitute for that (Lane & Aqrab).

*شفاعة* (intercession) is derived from

*شفع* which means, he provided a thing, which was alone, with another, or he joined up a single thing with another, so as to make it one of a pair or couple. The Arabs say *كان وترا فنشفتته* i.e. it was a single thing and I joined to it another and made it one of a couple. According to Ar-Rāghib *الشفع* signifies the adjoining a thing to its like; thus the word has the significance of likeness or similarity also. Then the verb *شفع* has come to mean, he interceded, because the person who intercedes for another attaches, or, as it were, joins or links up the latter to himself and thus uses his influence in his favour. Thus *شفع لفلان اوفى فلان الى الامير* means, he interceded for such a person with the prince; he requested or prayed the prince to help or show favour to such a person on the ground that he was attached to him as a relation or friend or follower, etc. *شفاعة* therefore means, interceding or praying for a person to the effect that he may be shown favour or that his sins may be passed over, on the ground that he is connected with the intercessor or is like or similar to him, it being also implied that the petitioner is a person of higher position than the one for whom he pleads and is also connected with him



with whom he intercedes, (Aqrab, Mufradāt, Lane & Lisān).

عدل (ransom) means: (1) equity or justice (2) equal compensation; (3) fair and equitable ransom (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The verse is important. God addresses the Israelites, who claimed to be the progeny of the Prophets, saying that though it was a fact that they were descended from holy personages and He had shown special favour to them inasmuch as He had exalted them above other peoples of the age, yet as they repeatedly broke His covenant and had begun to lead wicked lives and had finally rejected the Promised Prophet, who had made his appearance in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the Bible, they no longer deserved His blessings, but had, on the contrary, become the object of His wrath and must be prepared to render an account of their deeds. The verse under comment calls upon the Jews to prepare themselves for the Day of Retribution when they would stand alone before God and there would be none to intercede for them or help them in any other way. The fact that they were descendants of holy persons would be of no avail, nor would any substitute or ransom be accepted from them. It would indeed be a dreadful day for those who reject God's Messengers; for on that day nothing but one's own deeds would count.

As a criminal can count on four possible means of securing his release, God has mentioned all those means and has made it clear that none

of them will avail him on the Day of Reckoning. The first idea that comes to the mind of a culprit is to prove that the offence alleged to have been committed by him was legally not committed by him at all. It was either committed by somebody else or, if it was in fact committed by him, it was committed at the instigation of another person, or another person undertook to shoulder his burden. Thus the culprit tries to secure his release by throwing the blame or the responsibility on somebody else. In view of this plea, the Quran says that (on the Day of Judgement) *no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul*. If a person is really sinful, the blame will surely lie on his own head and will, by no means, be shifted to another person. Everyone will bear his own cross and there will be no atonement in the sense of one man serving as a substitute for another.

The second possible way of escape when a criminal fails to shift the responsibility to another person, is for him either to try to secure the intercession of an influential person in his favour or to enter a plea that he is related to some big personality and hence is entitled to special treatment. In reply to this, the Quran says, *nor shall intercession be accepted for it*. As explained above, the word شفاعة here has a twofold significance: (a) that no influential person shall be allowed to intercede for a culprit; and (b) that no culprit shall himself be allowed to put in the plea that he is related to an influential person.

The third possible means of release is for the culprit to try to secure his

freedom by paying a ransom. With regard to this the Quran says, *nor shall ransom be taken from it*.

Finally, when a criminal sees that all other means of escape have failed, he thinks of using force and getting his release by violence. With regard to this, the Quran says: *nor shall they be helped*, i.e. they shall find no helpers against God.

The Quran mentions these things not by way of threat but to make the Jews realize that they should not entertain false hopes. The only way open to them was to accept the Holy Prophet whom God had raised for their own good.

Here arises a very important question. What is the teaching of Islam about شفاعة (intercession)? Does Islam hold it to be quite useless and unlawful, as would appear from the verse under comment, or does it hold certain forms of شفاعة to be useful and lawful and others to be useless and unlawful? From the teachings of the Quran and the Hadīth it appears that the latter view is correct and we proceed to discuss it accordingly. It should be stated at once that the word "intercession" is a very imperfect rendering of the word شفاعة. It conveys only a part of the meaning of شفاعة and that too very imperfectly.

As explained under Important Words, the root meaning of the word شفاعة is to attach or connect or join a thing, or, for that matter, to connect or join oneself with another thing or person so as to form a pair or a couple on the basis of similarity. The Quran uses the different derivations of this

word in no less than 29 different places and in all of them the root meaning of the word is retained in one form or another. The word is used in the sense of "intercession" because the person who intercedes for somebody must have a twofold connection:

*Firstly*, he must have a special connection with the being or person with whom he wishes to intercede, for without such connection none dare intercede nor can intercession be fruitful.

*Secondly*, he must also have a special connection with the person for whom he intercedes, because none can think of interceding for a person unless he is specially connected with the latter and is akin or similar to him.

In religious terminology شفاعة means intercession with God by a holy man for a sinful person. Here too the twofold connection referred to above is essential. The holy person who intercedes with God must have a special connection with Him, enjoying His special favour and being very near and dear to Him. On the other hand, he should also have real connection with the person on whose behalf he wishes to intercede; for without such connection he cannot be properly moved to intercede nor can his intercession carry much weight with God. In fact, the intercessor, on the essential basis of the aforementioned double connection, approaches God saying, as it were, "My God, I come to Thee with a special request, knowing that Thou art well pleased with me and that I enjoy Thy special favour. Here

is an erring man who is sincerely connected with me but in moments of weakness he has stumbled and faltered. But as Thou art kind and good to me, O Lord, be Thou kind also to this sinful servant of Thine and pardon him his sins". This is what may be termed the essence of شفاعة as taught and, held lawful, by Islam.

From the above significance of the word it is apparent that true شفاعة is governed by the following conditions:

(1) He who intercedes must be very near and dear to God enjoying His special favour.

(2) The person for whom he wishes to intercede must have a true and real connection with him.

(3) The person in whose favour intercession is to be made must be a good person overall, only casually tempted to sin in moments of weakness; for it cannot be entertained for a moment that a habitually wicked one can enjoy a true connection with a holy person.

(4) Intercession must always be made with God's permission; for it is God alone Who knows (a) whether a so-called holy person really stands near and dear to Him, and (b) whether the person for whom intercession is being made is truly and sincerely connected with the holy man making the intercession, for there is many a connection which looks sound and genuine from outside but is rotten from within.

(5) Each and every intercession is not necessarily lawful or fruitful. Only that intercession is lawful which

fulfils all the requisite conditions.

The above view finds clear corroboration in the Islamic teachings. For instance, the Quran says: *And fear the day when no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor any شفاعة (intercession) avail it, nor shall they be helped* (2:124). This verse is addressed to the Jews and signifies that, as they have rejected the Holy Prophet and thus failed to form the most important of spiritual connections, therefore no other connection or intercession will avail them on the Day of Judgement. This makes it clear that شفاعة can avail only those who accept the Messenger of the day. It cannot avail those who, by rejecting a Messenger of God, rebel against divine authority. As such people fail to form the connection that they are called upon to form, no question of شفاعة arises.

Again the Quran says: *On the Day of Judgement شفاعة (intercession) shall not avail any person except him for whom God grants permission and with whose word (i.e. with whose expression of faith) He is pleased* (20:110). This verse throws light on three very important points:

(a) That if, on the one hand, there are some whom شفاعة (intercession) will not avail, on the other hand, there are others whom it will certainly avail.

(b) But it will avail only those for whom God grants special permission.

(c) That such permission will be granted only in the case of those

sinner whose faith at least is sound, i.e. their ايمان (faith) is true and well-founded; only in اعمال (practice) they sometimes show weakness.

At another place the Quran says: *Who is he that will intercede with God except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases* (2:256). This verse supplies the reason for the principle adduced in the verse quoted above. God's permission is necessary because His knowledge alone is perfect and it is only He Who knows whether the twofold connection essential for شفاعة really exists, i.e. (1) whether the holy person wishing to intercede really enjoys the special relation with God required for such intercession and, (2) whether the person for whom he wishes to intercede is truly and sincerely connected with him.

To illustrate the above point, we may well quote an incident in Noah's life. At the time of the great Deluge, he saw that his son had been caught by the surging waves and was going to be drowned. Thereupon he turned to God, saying that the drowning boy was one of his family whom God had promised to save. Upon this God sharply reprimanded him, saying, *He is surely not of thy family; he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge. I advise thee lest thou become one of the ignorant* (11:47). This verse beautifully illustrates the philosophy of شفاعة. In a

moment of great uneasiness of mind Noah interceded for his son with God but forgot to ask for His permission, whereupon God reminded him that though the boy was his son in the physical sense, he was not one in the true spiritual sense and was therefore not entitled to شفاعة which has its basis in spiritual kinship.

Having briefly explained the nature and conditions of شفاعة, we now come to the question: How many forms of شفاعة are there? A study of the relevant Quranic verses and of the attendant facts reveals that شفاعة is of three kinds:

(1) Firstly, there is the verbal شفاعة which has been interpreted as "intercession". In this form of شفاعة a holy person actually prays to God on the basis of his special connection with Him that a sinful person who is truly connected with him may be granted forgiveness or that, for that matter, a person suffering from some disease or misfortune may be restored to health or saved from the attending misfortune. In this case "intercession" is really a form of prayer but it makes a stronger appeal and is much more efficacious. For, whereas a prayer is simply a request made to God, شفاعة (intercession) is a prayer reinforced by the twofold connection referred to above. The شفيع (intercessor) appeals to God in a special way because (a) he enjoys God's special favour, and (b) the person for whom he intercedes is truly and sincerely connected with him. This twofold connection gives intercession a strength that is lacking in an ordinary prayer. The intercessor,

so to speak, says to God "My God, if Thou holdest me dear, then be Thou kind also to this sufferer who is dear to me." Such a prayer, if offered with God's permission, most forcefully moves the mercy of God and is sure of acceptance.

(2) Secondly, there is the form of شفاعة which, though verbal, yet is offered not in the form of a prayer but merely as a simple statement expressive of the relation between the intercessor and the person for whom he intercedes. Sometimes, it happens that through fear of God or through modesty the intercessor does not make an intercession in the form of a direct request or prayer but simply expresses the relation existing between him and the person for whom he wishes to intercede, leaving the conclusion to be drawn by God Himself. A case in point is that of Noah's intercession for his son referred to above. Noah did not actually pray for his son but simply drew God's attention to their relationship: *My Lord, verily my son is of my family and surely Thy promise is true* (11:46). These are Noah's words. It is a clear case of شفاعة although the actual form of prayer is wanting.

(3) Thirdly, there is the شفاعة which is neither made in the form of a prayer nor expressed in words. It simply consists in the practical existence of the twofold relation necessary for شفاعة. In fact, in this case the relationship itself is spoken of as شفاعة. For instance, the Quran speaks of the Jews saying لا تنفعها شفاعة i.e. on the Day of Judgement no شفاعة shall

avail them (2:124). Here شفاعة is used simply in the sense of connection. God means to say that as the Jews have refused to connect themselves with the Holy Prophet of Islam, therefore no other connection will avail them. Their being counted among the followers of Abraham or Moses or David, etc., will be of no avail to them. In this sense a Prophet of God is a شفيع or intercessor for all his true followers without distinction. Everybody who establishes a true connection with him is saved while others perish. In this sense God also is a شفيع for those who connect themselves with Him are saved, while others who remain disconnected are ruined.

Now the question arises, Why has God instituted شفاعة at all? The answer is as follows:

*Firstly*, شفاعة in the sense of good association is the very essence of spirituality. All spiritual progress depends on a good spiritual contact. A soul not in contact with God is lost and, for that matter, a soul not in contact with the Prophet of the day, who represents God on earth, is also lost. The Quran says, he who forms a good connection will reap the benefit thereof and he who forms an evil connection will suffer the loss attached thereto (4:86). Thus the need and the usefulness of شفاعة in the sense of a good connection is self-evident and one need not say much about it. But when we come to شفاعة in the sense of intercession, an explanation seems called for. When all depends on true belief and right actions, why should the necessity of intercession arise at all? Even a cursory thought leads to the conviction that this question,

which has misled many, arises from the misleading conception of the word "intercession" as ordinarily understood. Unprincipled men go about interceding for criminals with unprincipled judges, thus thwarting the very ends of justice. Islamic شفاعة is far from this. It is not a mere intercession but is an adjunct of the principle of true belief and right actions. According to Islam only that person is entitled to شفاعة who is sincerely connected with the Prophet of the day, is true in faith and earnestly tries to live a righteous life according to the teachings of Islam. But, being weak, he sometimes stumbles. There is nothing inherently wrong with his connection with the Prophet, which is pure and true; only an occasional stumbling in practice makes him fall short of the prescribed standard. God entitles such a one to شفاعة and that also by His special permission; and when the Knower of all things considers one to be deserving of forgiveness, who is there to object that the case is not deserving? The Islamic شفاعة is, in fact, only another form of repentance. For what is توبة (repentance) but reforming a broken connection or tightening up a loose one? But whereas the door of repentance is closed with death, the door of شفاعة remains open. Moreover, شفاعة is a means of the manifestation of God's mercy and God says رَحْمَتِي سَبَقَتْ غَضَبِي i.e. "My mercy is stronger than My anger" (Bukhārī). Thus شفاعة (intercession) is based on the manifestation of God's mercy; and as God is not judge but مالِك (Master), there is nothing to stop Him from extending His mercy to whomsoever He pleases.

Yet another reason why شفاعة has been allowed by Islam is that by this means God honours His Prophets. It is indeed a great honour that He should allow a person to intercede with Him.

It has been objected by some Christian critics of Islam that the doctrine of شفاعة is likely to encourage people to commit sins. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The شفاعة as allowed by Islam should encourage people to strengthen their connection with the Prophet rather than weaken it. As sin is nothing but a product of weakness in the spiritual connection, شفاعة and sin really stand poles apart and it is sheer ignorance to suggest that the doctrine of شفاعة, whose very conception rests on the soundness of man's connection with God and His Prophet, encourages one to sin. On the contrary, it is the Christian doctrine of Atonement which throws open the floodgates of sin; for, unlike Islamic شفاعة the doctrine of Atonement is based on the unnatural conception that one man can bear the sins of another. But of this, more will be explained later when we come to the relevant verses.

Now we come to the last question in this connection, i.e. who will be شفيع (intercessor) on the Day of Judgement? This question has given rise to much controversy and consequently much misunderstanding. Let it be said up front that Islam does not confine شفاعة (intercession) to one person only; for, according to the Islamic conception of شفاعة every holy person whose connection can materially influence the spiritual condition of a man is virtually a شفيع

50. And remember the time when "We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, <sup>b</sup>slaying your sons and sparing your women; and in that there was a great trial for you from your Lord.<sup>56</sup>

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ  
يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ  
أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي  
ذَلِكَ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ٥٠

<sup>a</sup>14:7; 20:81; 44:31, 32. <sup>b</sup>7:128, 142; 28:5.

for him. All Prophets are therefore شفيع but they are شفيع only in their own respective spheres. Abraham is a شفيع for those who followed him and Moses is a شفيع for those who followed him and so on. But with the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam, all other connections have come to an end; for the message of the Holy Prophet is for all time and all mankind. Even the present-day followers of Moses or Jesus cannot turn to these Prophets for شفاعه, because spiritually they are now under the regime of the Holy Prophet of Islam, the regimes of the previous Prophets having come to an end. As a matter of fact, as explained by the Quran itself, the real شفيع is God alone. Says the Quran: *There is no helper nor شفيع (intercessor) for you except Allah; will you not then ponder?* (32:5) Now as God alone is the real شفيع i.e. He is the One connection with Whom really matters, the Prophets of God become شفيع in a secondary way only. Whosoever among the Prophets represents God on earth at a particular time and in a particular place becomes a شفيع for the people of that time and that place. From this it follows that the Prophets of God who passed before

Islam were شفيع for their own followers and in their own time only; with the advent of Islam the period of their شفاعه came to an end. Now the Prophet of Islam is the only شفيع for all times and all peoples. Being a perfect image of God he is (1) the perfect شفيع and, having a universal mission he is (2) the universal شفيع; and having cancelled all previous connections he is now (3) the only شفيع (peace and blessings of God be on him). For proof of the fact that the Holy Prophet has himself put forward the above claim, the reader is referred to a ḥadīth where the aforesaid distinction of the Prophet on the Day of Judgement is most vividly set forth (Muslim ch. on *Īmān*).

### 56. Important Words:

آل (people) is derived from the verb آل which gives the sense of returning or governing or exercising control or managing. The noun آل thus means the family or party of a man, or followers of a leader, or subjects of a ruler to whom they constantly return or who governs or exercises control over them. The word اهل is also sometimes taken to be another form of the word آل and means what the latter word means.

فرعون (Pharaoh) is not a personal name. It was the title held by the ancient kings of Egypt. Every Egyptian king is called فرعون in the Bible. The personal name of the Pharaoh with whom Moses came in contact was Rameses II (Enc. Bib.).

يذبحون (slaying) is derived from ذبح which originally means, he slaughtered or cut open the throat of an animal, or he strangled a person to death. Here the word is used in the intensified form *dhabbaḥa* to signify (1) that Pharaoh and his people treated the Israelites as mere beasts, and (2) that they killed them most mercilessly. It does not mean that they actually slaughtered them like animals, for elsewhere the Quran, speaking of the same torment, uses the word يقتلون instead of يذبحون (7:142).

نساء (women) is the plural of امرأة (a woman) from a different root. Though the word generally means "women" (Aqrab), it is also sometimes used about girls, as the Quran itself has used it (4:128). It is also used to signify "wives" (33:33).

بلاء (trial) means, anything by means of which a person may be tried; a trial whether through a blessing or an affliction (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

In verses 41-48 God reminded the Israelites of His blessings in general, particularly the blessing of prophethood, which He had bestowed on them. He now calls their attention to such favours as exalted the Israelites above other peoples. The first of them to which God refers here

is their deliverance from the hands of Pharaoh and his people, who inflicted on them grievous torments.

Some Christian critics have objected that whereas the Bible nowhere speaks of the sons of the Israelites being slaughtered like beasts, the Quran so speaks of them. We have shown under Important Words that the word ذبح used in the verse does not signify actual slaughtering by cutting the throat. It also means strangling to death. As Pharaoh first ordered the male children of the Israelites to be strangled at birth and later changed the decree to other methods of killing, the Quran uses a word which covers all such forms of killing. As already hinted, the word ذبح in the sense of slaughtering is used figuratively to denote that Pharaoh and his people treated the Israelites most mercilessly, killing them in whatever manner they liked. Elsewhere the Quran uses the word قتل i.e. killing in place of ذبح i.e. slaughtering (7:142).

In Exod. 1:8-22, we read: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply. Therefore they (the Egyptians) did set over them taskmasters to afflict them (the Israelites) with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were



grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives...When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive (putting up the excuse that Israelite women being healthier than Egyptians were generally delivered before the midwives arrived). And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."

The above quotation clearly shows that the Pharaoh whose name was Rameses II not only inflicted upon the Israelites grievous torments by imposing upon them hard and disgraceful labour, but also gave orders to kill their sons and spare their daughters who were thus allowed to grow to womanhood and became نساء as the Quran puts it. The Quran uses the word ذبح to signify that at first the order was to strangle the Israelite male children at birth and when that order failed in its purpose, another was issued to the effect that all male children should be thrown into the river—a most merciless form

of killing in which all human feelings were laid aside and the Israelites were treated as mere beasts.

As the word بلاء (trial) may mean either a trial through a favour or blessing, or a trial through grief or affliction, the words "in that" occurring in the verse may either refer to the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh's people, in which case the word trial will mean a favour or a blessing; or they refer to the slaying of the male children, in which case it would mean grief or affliction.

God reminds the Israelites in the verse how He delivered them from grievous torments and afflictions and calls their attention to the magnitude of the Sign which He showed in their favour. He tells them that He had faithfully fulfilled the promises which He had made to Abraham and had left nothing undone, but when they transgressed and made an ill return for the favours that had been bestowed upon them, He withheld His favours from them and transferred the gift of prophecy to their brethren, the children of Ishmael.

God does not say that He delivered the children of Israel from Pharaoh, but that He delivered them from "Pharaoh's people", for it was through his people that Pharaoh inflicted torments upon them, he himself remaining in the background. Moreover, the expression آل فرعون does not exclude Pharaoh, for it, according to Arabic idiom, may also mean, Pharaoh and his people.

51. And *remember the time* when We divided the sea for you and saved you and <sup>a</sup>drowned Pharaoh's people, while you looked on.<sup>57</sup>

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا  
أَلْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:137; 8:55; 20:78-81; 26:64-67; 28:41; 44:25.

### 57. Important Words:

فرقا (We divided) is from فرق meaning, he divided or he split. فرق الشعر means, he made parting in the hair (Aqrah).

بكم (for you) may give a number of meanings: (1) for you; (2) with you, i.e. the sea divided or receded as you proceeded, as if you were the means of dividing it; (3) because of you, i.e. in order to save you; (4) in your presence, i.e. while you were present (Kashshāf).

### Commentary:

The incident mentioned in this verse relates to the time when, under God's command, Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to Palestine. The Israelites left secretly at night, and when Pharaoh learnt of their flight, he pursued them with his hosts in order to bring them back to bondage. The verse mentions the favour bestowed by God on the Israelites by dividing the sea for them and drowning the Egyptians. The incident is narrated in Exod. 14:21-30. The Bible says: "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land and the waters were divided. And the

children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea... And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."

The بحر (sea) spoken of in the Quranic verse and mentioned in the Biblical quotation given above refers to the Red Sea through which or through an extremity of which the Israelites passed in their flight from Egypt to the Holy Land (Exod. 14).

Besides the verse under comment, the Quran also speaks of this incident in 20:78, 26:64 and 44:25. Says the Quran: *And We sent a revelation to Moses, saying, 'Take away My servants by night and strike for them a dry path through the sea'* (20:78). Again: *Then We revealed to Moses, saying, 'Strike the sea with thy rod'. Whereupon it parted and every part was like a huge sandhill*, i.e. on one side was the sea itself, and on the other (from which the sea had receded) there loomed large depressions filled with water (26:64). And again: *Take My servants away by*

*night; for you will surely be pursued. And leave the sea motionless* (i.e. pass through quickly and leave it at a time when the tide has all receded but has not yet begun to flow back, so that, on the one hand, finding the seabed dry and, on the other, feeling secure in the thought that the high tide was not likely to overtake them, the Egyptians might be tempted to follow on); *they are a host which is doomed to be drowned* (44:24, 25).

In view of the above description, the facts appear to be as follows. When the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, they were pursued by the army of Pharaoh. When they reached the arm of the Red Sea which lay across their route, they were greatly dismayed, for Pharaoh was close behind with his hosts. But God cheered them through Moses, asking him to strike the water with his rod. This being the time of ebb-tide, the sea receded, exposing to view in the bed of the sea huge mounds of dry sand interspersed with depressions filled with water. Under the lead of Moses the Israelites quickly crossed the dry bed of the sea to the opposite bank. The army of Pharaoh came in pursuit, and while they were yet in the bed of the sea the high tide returned and drowned them all.

It should be remembered that, according to the Quran, a miracle is purely the work of God, and man has no hand in it. So, the striking of the sea by Moses was merely a symbol or a sign, having nothing to do with the actual parting of the sea which was exclusively the work of God, Who so

arranged that it was the time of ebb-tide when Moses reached the sea so that just when He lifted his rod the sea began to recede. But when the army of Pharaoh began to cross the sea, they met with obstacles, just as heavily equipped armies generally do, and their progress was naturally retarded so that while they were yet in the midst of the sea, the high tide flowed and they were all drowned.

The words of the Quran do not lend themselves to the erroneous inference that there was an actual split in the sea to afford a passage for Moses and his followers. The two words used in the Quran in this connection are *فَرَقْنَا* (We divided) and *انفلق* (the sea parted); the root idea of both being "parting". These two words only corroborate the theory that when the Israelites reached the sea, the ebb-tide set in and the sea parted, exposing to view the sand dunes upon which the Israelites crossed over to the other side.

The fact that Pharaoh followed Moses through the bed of the sea also indicates that it was the time of the ebb-tide. If the sea had been actually split against all known laws of nature, Pharaoh would never have dared to follow in the wake of Moses. Nevertheless, it was a great miracle brought about by a subtle combination of the laws of nature which all united to save the Israelites and destroy Pharaoh and his people.

In this connection we may well quote an incident in Napoleon's life which goes to illustrate how the tide helped Moses and destroyed Pharaoh in their journey across the Red Sea.

52. And *remember the time* when We made Moses a <sup>a</sup>promise of forty nights; then you <sup>b</sup>took the calf *for worship* in his absence and you were transgressors.<sup>58</sup>

وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:143. <sup>b</sup>2:55, 93; 4:154; 7:149, 153; 20:89.

In Abbott's *Life of Napoleon* it is related that, "One day, with quite a retinue, he (Napoleon) made an excursion to that identical point of the Red Sea which, as tradition reports, the children of Israel crossed three thousand years ago. The tide was out, and he passed over the Asiatic shore upon extended flats. Various objects of interest engrossed his attention until late in the afternoon, when he commenced his return, the twilight faded away, and darkness came rapidly on. The party lost their path, and, as they were wandering bewildered among the sands, the rapidly returning tide surrounded them. The darkness of the night increased, and the horses floundered deeper and deeper in the rising waves. The water reached the girths of the saddles, and dashed upon the feet of the rider, and destruction seemed inevitable. From that perilous position Napoleon extricated himself by that presence of mind and promptness of decision which seemed never to fail him...The horses did not reach the shore until midnight, when they were wading breast deep in the swelling waves. The tide rises on that part of the coast to the height of 22 feet. 'Had I perished in that manner

like Pharaoh', said Napoleon, 'it would have furnished all the preachers in Christendom with a magnificent text against me'." (Abbott's *Life of Napoleon*, Chap. 12, p. 96).

The words, *while you looked on*, have been added in the verse to make the Israelites realize that though the above miracle was performed before their very eyes and their proud and haughty oppressor was brought to naught in their very sight, yet they proved ungrateful to their Lord and His Prophet.

### 58. Important Words:

ظالمون (transgressors) is the plural of ظالم which is derived from ظلم which means (1) he put a thing at a wrong place (2) he transgressed against or wronged a person (Aqarab).

### Commentary:

In this verse the incident of calf-worship mentioned in Exodus 32 is related. Man is generally the slave of environment. This is particularly true of a subject people, who assiduously imitate the manners and customs of their rulers. The Israelites had lived under the Pharaohs for a long time, and had imbibed the idolatrous faith of the Egyptians. When they left

53. Then <sup>a</sup>We forgave you thereafter, that you might be grateful.<sup>59</sup> ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:154.

Egypt with Moses, and came across any idol-worshipping people on the way, they requested Moses again and again to sanction a similar worship for them (7:139). So eager were they for such worship that when Moses went to Mount Sinai, they made a calf and took to worshipping it. They revered the calf, because in Egypt the cow was held in special veneration. Egypt, like India, was an agricultural country where cattle must be of the highest value to man. Hence cow-worship.

The Bible mentions Aaron as having made a calf for the Israelites (Exod. 32:1-6). But the Quran strongly refutes this idea. Aaron was a Prophet of God and could not stoop to idol-worship. Says the Quran, *And Aaron had said to them before this, 'O my people, you have only been tried by means of the calf; and surely, the Gracious God is your Lord; so follow me and do as I bid you' (20:91).* It is strange that such baseless and incredible stories as the participation of a chosen one of God in idol-worship should find place in a Book which claims to be inspired. It only proves that the Bible has been the object of human interference. It is probable that some interested people deliberately interpolated the sacred writings and ascribed certain vices to the Prophets; and the Christian divines eagerly took them for granted, as they were of good use to

them as a means of the exaltation of Jesus over the rest of the Prophets.

The verse speaks of the appointed duration as being of forty nights. In 7:143 the Quran further tells us that at first the appointed duration was thirty nights, but by a subsequent addition of ten the period was extended to forty nights which is a fuller number. This favour was granted to Moses because of his faithfulness and sincerity.

The words, *and you were transgressors*, mean, you resorted to setting up equals with God, because this practice is indeed the greatest ظلم i.e. putting a thing in a wrong place. Elsewhere the Quran says: شرك i.e. *attributing partners to God is indeed a great ظلم* (31:14).

### 59. Commentary:

We learn from Exod. 32:9, 10 that the worship of the calf called forth the wrath of God, whereupon Moses prayed to God for the Israelites and then, in the words of the Old Testament, 'the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people' (Exod. 32:14). In this connection it may be noted that the Quran uses the word 'forgave' instead of 'repented', as used in the Bible, for the latter expression is obviously quite inappropriate to God's attribute of Knowledge and Majesty. Most probably the word is either a mistranslation of the original or a later interpolation.

54. And remember the time when <sup>a</sup>We gave Moses the Book and the <sup>b</sup>Discrimination, that you might be rightly guided.<sup>60</sup>

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:88; 23:50; 32:24; 37:118; 40:54. <sup>b</sup>21:49.

It may also be noted here that the word غفر used in this verse does not only signify "forgiving or passing over a sin" but also "obliterating a sin". If a man truly and sincerely turns to God with repentance, He not only forgives him his sin but obliterates the very traces of it, leaving him as stainless and pure as a newborn child.

The words, *that you may be grateful*, point to a very deep truth. Forgiveness by a superior authority produces the feelings of gratefulness in the person forgiven, and gratefulness in turn impels a man to further acts of obedience and goodness. Thus a sort of continuity in righteousness is brought about.

### 60. Important Words:

موسى (Moses), the Founder of Judaism, was the deliverer of the Israelites from the hands of Pharaoh. He was an Israelite Prophet who, according to Biblical data, lived about 500 years after Abraham and about 1400 years before Jesus. Moses was a Law-giving Prophet, the other Israelite Prophets that came after him being only followers of his system. As a Law-giving Prophet and the founder of a great religious system, Moses bears striking resemblance to the Holy Prophet of Islam to whom he has been likened in the Quran itself (73:16).

As for the name Moses, it may be briefly noted that موسى (Moses) is really a Hebrew word in which language it is written and pronounced as موش (moshe) and means, "a thing drawn out of water" or simply "a thing drawn out" (Enc. Bib.). The Bible itself supports that significance where Pharaoh's daughter, speaking of the name Moses, says, "because I drew him out of the water" (Exod. 2:10). This derivation also finds support in Arabic, from which language Hebrew is derived. The Arabs say اوشى الشيء i.e. he extricated or drew out the thing (Aqrab). Thus the word موسى which is the passive participle from اوشى would mean "a thing extricated" or "a thing drawn out". Another possible derivation is from اوسى (derived from موسى) They say اوسى الشيء i.e. he cut the thing asunder (Aqrab). As Moses was cut off from his family, he was given that name.

Recently, however, the view has been expressed by certain Western scholars, e.g., by Breasted in his *Dawn of Conscience* and by Freud in his *Moses and Monotheism* that Moses is not a Hebrew name but an Egyptian. It is also claimed that Moses was not an Israelite by birth and did not belong to Hebrew stock. There can be no objection if we accept the first-mentioned view regarding the etymology of the name *Moses*, because as Moses was, in his

childhood, cut off from his own people and was reared in Pharaoh's house, it was not unnatural for Pharaoh's daughter, herself an Egyptian, to give him a name of her own liking. But, as pointed out above, the fact is that Moses is a Hebrew name and Pharaoh's daughter, if indeed it were she who gave him that name, must have certainly been influenced to give the child a Hebrew name, thinking that he belonged to the Israelite people. It is probable, however, that the name was suggested by the sister of Moses herself who was personally known to the household of Pharaoh, being present at the time when Pharaoh's daughter picked up the lad from the river (Exod. 2:7; Quran, 28:9-13).

But there is absolutely no ground for accepting the view that Moses was not an Israelite or that the children of Israel never settled in Egypt. The idea is repugnant to all established facts and runs counter to the accepted history of the Jewish people and to the Bible and the Quran, both giving the lie to it. Among the arguments Western critics have advanced in support of their view, two appear to be the more noteworthy. One is that موسى (Moses) is an Egyptian name occurring in many combinations of that language e.g., *Amenmesse*, *Ahmosi*, *Thotmes*, *Ramose*, etc. the last-mentioned being the same as Rameses, the name of the Pharaoh in whose time Moses lived. Though a deeper study of these words would indicate that these Egyptian names are really different from the Hebrew or Arabic word discussed

above, yet even if we admit the name Moses to be of Egyptian origin, there is no justification for assuming that the man Moses was not Israelite but Egyptian by birth. As Israelites were a subject people in Egypt, living under the rule of the Pharaohs, it is no wonder if they adopted some of the Egyptian names of the ruling class, just as in India many Indians are fond of, and actually adopt, English names. But, as shown above, the fact remains that موسى is a Hebrew name, having definite derivation in both Hebrew and Arabic.

The second argument advanced by these critics is that the idea of God's Oneness is originally Egyptian, having been first conceived and adopted by an ancient Egyptian king named *Amenhotep* IV who came to the throne in 1375 B.C. and passed away about 1358 B.C. when probably not 30 years of age. Later he gave himself the title of *Ikhnaton* (or *Akhenaton*) which means "the servant of the one God". This, these critics allege, shows that Moses was an Egyptian who borrowed the idea of God's Oneness from *Ikhnaton* and then preached it among the Israelites. The inference is simply absurd. In the first place, it is against all reason to suppose that a certain conception is the monopoly of one people only. More than one people may independently form similar ideas without having borrowed them from one another. Secondly, even supposing that the idea of God's unity is of Egyptian origin, there is no justification for the inference that

Moses was not an Israelite. If an Indian can borrow an idea from an Englishman, why cannot an Israelite borrow an idea from an Egyptian? The truth is that the idea of God's Oneness is neither the produce of Egypt nor of Palestine nor of any other place. It has its origin in divine revelation which has been independently vouchsafed to different peoples in different lands and at different times. It is never claimed that Moses was the first to conceive or preach that idea. He got it through divine revelation just as Jacob and Isaac and Abraham and Noah and Adam got it before him.

In short, there is no justification for supposing that the name Moses is of Egyptian origin or that the man Moses was not an Israelite. The linguistic evidence of Hebrew and Arabic, combined with reason and the evidence of Jewish history and tradition, not to speak of the story of the Bible and the Quran, all go to support the already established fact that Moses was an Israelite and not an Egyptian by birth, and that his name is also of Hebrew origin. (For a full discussion of the point see *Tafsīr-e-Kabīr* by Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Head of the Aḥmadiyya Community, under 2:54).

الكتاب (the Book) is derived from كَبَّ which means: (1) he wrote; (2) he made a thing obligatory, or he prescribed a law. The word كَتَاب bears the following meanings: (1) a thing in which or on which one writes; (2) a book; (3) a revealed book; (4) an epistle or letter; (5) an injunction or a

commandment prescribed for a person or a people (Aqrab).

الفرقان (the Discrimination) is an Arabic word derived from فَرَّقَ i.e. he divided or differentiated. It is wrong to think that it is not an Arabic but a Syriac word. The Arabic language abounds in words derived from the same root, which are also commonly met with in pre-Islamic literature of Arabia. The root meaning of the word فَرَّقَ is to differentiate. Hence فَرَّقَان is applied to that which differentiates between the true and the false, between sound reasoning and fallacy. *Furqān* also means 'an argument', because an argument serves to discriminate between the true and the false. 'Morning' or 'Dawn' are also termed *furqān* because they separate night from day. فَرَّقَان also means 'aid' or 'support', because the man helped and supported becomes distinguished from those against whom he receives assistance (Tāj). From the above it is clear that all revealed Books are فَرَّقَان as well as all "signs" granted by God.

### Commentary:

Here the word الكتاب (translated in the text as the Book) is used for the "tablets" on which the Ten Commandments given to Moses were written. The Quran itself makes it clear in 7:146, 151, 155 that it was only the tablets and not the Pentateuch that were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and, as explained under Important Words, the word الكتاب does not necessarily mean a book, but anything on which something is written. Thus the word *kitāb* here refers, not to the



55. And *remember the time* when Moses said to his people: ‘O my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by taking the calf *for worship*; turn ye therefore to your Maker, and slay your own people; that is best for you with your Maker.’ Then He turned towards you *with compassion*. Surely, He is Oft-Returning *with compassion*, and is Merciful.<sup>61</sup>

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يُقَوْمِ إِنِّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ ۖ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝٥٥

Pentateuch, but to the Ten Commandments that were written on the tablets. The verse would therefore mean that God gave Moses not only the Book or the Commandments written on the tablets but also such clear Signs and arguments, and brought about such events as led to clear discrimination between truth and falsehood. According to the Quran, فرقان is not the name of any particular thing; but every Sign and every instance of divine assistance discriminating truth from falsehood and every argument which serves the same object is termed فرقان.

The Quran uses the word فرقان about itself (25:2) and also calls the Battle of Badr, which so eminently helped to break the power of the Quraish, يوم الفرقان i.e. the Day of Discrimination (8:42).

Dr. Wherry's criticism that the Quran is wrong in stating in this verse that the Torah was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai betrays his ignorance of the Arabic language. He was

apparently unaware that in Arabic the word كتاب is used in a much wider sense than "book". His inadequate knowledge of the Arabic language has also led Wherry to observe that the Prophet of Islam must have borrowed the word فرقان from the Syrians.

### 61. Important Words:

بارى (Maker) is derived from برى which means, he shaped or fashioned a reed into a pen, or he shaped an arrow. بارى means, one who forms or fashions a thing by cutting; one who shapes out or pares a thing. بارى is to be distinguished from خالق for whereas the latter word means, one who brings a thing into existence according to the proper plan or measure, or one who brings a thing into existence from a state of nonexistence, the former word, i.e. بارى signifies one who fashions a thing into its proper shape. Generally, however, بارى is used as somewhat synonymous with خالق, for it is the

formation of a shape which is the result in each case (Mufradāt & Lane).

### Commentary:

It appears from this verse that, although after the incident of calf-worship a general pardon was granted to the Israelites, yet it was thought essential to punish the ringleaders who were ordered to be slain. The clause *فَاَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ* does not mean "slay yourselves", but "slay your men or slay your kith and kin". The latter meaning is borne out by 2:85, where God says, *you shall not turn your people out of your homes*. Similarly, in 24:62, we read: *When you enter houses, greet your people with salām*. In these verses the expression *أنفُسَكُمْ* has been used in the sense of 'your people or your brethren'. See also 2:86 & 4:67.

Speaking of this incident, the Bible says: "Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exod. 32:27, 28).

In the above passage, the number of persons slain has been put at three thousand, but this is apparently an error. Similarly, the number of the Israelites who came out of Egypt is represented in the Bible as six hundred thousand (Exod. 12:37) which also is clearly wrong. Such a large number could not live as

servants and labourers of the Egyptians, who themselves speak of them as "a small community" (the Quran, 26:55). The error has apparently arisen from a confusion of the words *إِلْف* (*ilf*) and *أَلْف* (*alf*), the former meaning "a family", and the latter "a thousand" (Aqrab). Really, there were only 600 families of the Israelites who lived in Egypt and who left the country under the leadership of Moses, but they were misconstrued into 600 thousands. Similarly, the number of persons slain could scarcely be three thousand. There were most likely only three families the leaders of which took part in setting up the calf for worship, and these were put to death, by their own kinsmen at the bidding of Moses.

The words *فَاَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ* (slay yourselves) have also been construed as "kill your desires"—an interpretation borne out by the usage of the Arabic language. Some commentators prefer this interpretation to the one given above on the ground that the Israelites, having been forgiven by God at the intercession of Moses, could not have been ordered to slay their brethren, for such an order would have been incompatible with the forgiveness granted to them. This argument, however, does not appear to be sound for forgiveness of a people as a whole is not incompatible with the punishment of a few ringleaders.

The clause, *turn ye therefore to your Maker*, implies an exhortation to the Israelites to turn to their *بَارِي* or Maker or Fashioner, which means

56. And *remember* when you said: 'O Moses, we will by no means believe thee "until we see Allah face to face;" then the thunderbolt overtook you, while you gazed.<sup>62</sup>

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَمُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:154.

that they should work a change or reformation in themselves.

### 62. Important Words:

الصاعقة (the thunderbolt). See 2:20.

### Commentary:

The present-day Bible, at fault in many places, does not make a direct mention of the incident referred to in the verse under comment. But a careful study of it reveals the fact that the reference is to the time when Moses went up the Mount to receive God's Commandments and left his men camped at the foot of the mountain. On the day appointed, Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the nether part of the Mount. And the Lord came down on Mount Sinai on the top of the Mount and ordered Moses saying: "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze and many of them perish" (Exod. 19:21). The words "to gaze" occurring in the above quotation clearly show that the Israelites were eager to see God and, as the Quran puts it, they had previously expressed a desire to that effect. But when the manifestation actually came and they saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and

the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, they removed themselves and stood afar off and exclaimed to Moses, saying: "Speak thou with us and we will hear: but let not God speak with us lest we die" (Exod. 20:19). This shows that, at first, they wanted to see God, i.e. see a most clear manifestation of Him without which they would not believe, but having been greatly terrified, they afterwards went to the other extreme and shouted to Moses that they would have none of the manifestations and would not even listen to God's words lest they die.

As the word قال does not necessarily mean "he said" but is used on occasions when one does not say a thing in so many words but simply expresses a wish or idea by one's condition (see under 2:31), it is possible that the Israelites did not make this demand verbally but that their condition was expressive of it. In this case the words اذ قلتم would not mean "when you said" but "when your attitude showed that".

As the word صاعقة also means 'death', the verse may be taken to mean that this unreasonable demand of the Israelites so arrogantly expressed brought about their

57. Then <sup>a</sup>We raised you up after your death, that you might be grateful.<sup>63</sup>

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:260; 6:123.

spiritual death. This significance finds corroboration in the next verse wherein God says: *Then We raised you up after your death.*

It may be noted here that whereas the Bible mentions the incident of calf-worship after the incident referred to above, the Quran reverses the order, mentioning the incident of calf-worship before that of the demand of the Israelites to see God; and a careful study of the relevant facts indicates that the Quran order is the correct one. The incident of the calf must certainly have taken place before the Israelites went to Mount Sinai and before the Lord came down upon the Mount in the sight of the people; for if the Israelites had already gone to the Mount and had seen a clear manifestation of God, then it is hardly possible that they should have taken the calf for their God after such manifestation. Evidently they had made the calf before going to Mount Sinai, and when Moses ordered them to refrain from calf-worship, they obeyed but expressed an arrogant desire to see God so that they might be sure of His existence. Thereupon Moses took them to the Mount and God descended on the Mount in the sight of the people (Exod. 19:9-11). The words of the Quran: *Then the thunderbolt overtook you*, may refer to the thunders and lightnings which

accompanied the manifestation of God and which caused the Israelites to tremble with fear.

### 63. Important Words:

بَعَثْنَاكُم (We raised you) is from بَعَثَ. They say بَعَثَهُ i.e. (1) he sent him as a messenger; (2) he made him to rise; (3) he roused him up; (4) He (God) brought him to life; (5) he awoke him from sleep; (6) he instigated him to do a certain thing (Aqrab).

مَوْتِكُمْ (your death). See notes on 2:20 and 2:29 where it has been explained that the word مَوْت (death) includes (1) spiritual death; and (2) a state of extreme sorrow, grief, or fear, etc.

### Commentary:

The verse should not be understood to mean that the Israelites were restored to life after they had actually died. The Quran strongly repudiates the idea of the dead coming to life again in this world (21:96). The death spoken of in the verse is either spiritual death or a state of extreme grief or terror brought about through dreadful punishment, etc. The Bible testifies to the "death" of which the Quran speaks, as follows: "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said unto

58. And <sup>a</sup>We caused the clouds to be a shade over you and <sup>b</sup>sent down on you Manna and Salwā, saying: 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you.' And they wronged Us not, but it was themselves that they wronged.<sup>64</sup>

وَوَهَبْنَا لَكُمْ السَّمَاءَ وَآَنَزْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ  
الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ ۖ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا  
رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا  
أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>7:161. <sup>b</sup>7:161; 20:81.

Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee...And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf" (Exod. 32:31-35).

But God's forgiveness soon followed; for He did not want to ruin the Israelites, but to raise them morally and spiritually and make them a grateful people.

#### 64. Important Words:

من (*Manna*). The infinitive من signifies bestowing favour on or doing good to. They say من عليه i.e. he bestowed a favour on him without his labouring for it. من means: (1) a favour; (2) anything obtained without trouble or difficulty; (3) honey-dew (Aqrab).

سلوى (*Salwā*) is derived from سلا. They say سلا عن الشيء i.e. he was satisfied with it سلاه عن الشيء means, he satisfied him with it; he removed his grief and worry through it. سلوى is (1) a whitish bird resembling a quail and found in some parts of Arabia and the neighbouring countries. It also means, (2) whatever renders a person contented and happy;

(3) honey (Aqrab).

#### Commentary:

As the Israelites were camping in hot and open country, God speaks of the clouds having been sent to give them shade. We learn from Exod. 40:34-38, that clouds spread and shaded the spot where the Israelites encamped, and that they dispersed on the day when it was time for them to resume their journey. But the verse under comment shows that the clouds meant not only shadow but also rainfall because, *firstly*, it is rain-clouds that are generally dark and dense; and, *secondly*, along with the "clouds," the Quran also mentions two eatables, *Manna* and *Salwā*, which served as complement to the favour mentioned in the shadowing clouds. In fact, there was scarcity of both water and food in that arid country, and God used to quench their thirst by sending clouds, and satisfy their hunger by providing *Manna* and *Salwā*. And, no wonder, for God shows special favours to His servants in order to remove their difficulties and promote their comfort.

The sending down of *Manna* and *Salwā* has been mentioned in Exod. 16:11-15, where we read: "And the

59. And *remember the time* "when We said, "Enter this village and eat therefrom—wherever you will—plentifully; and enter the gate submissively and say, 'God! forgive us our sins.' We shall forgive you your sins and We shall give increase to those who do good."<sup>65</sup>

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا  
حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ  
سُجَّدًا وَ قُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ  
خَطِيئَتَكُمْ ۚ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

<sup>65</sup>7:162.

Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

When the children of Israel got no food in the wilderness and death stared them in the face, they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron. They said to them: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this

whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. 16:3). These murmurings of the Israelites were answered in the passage quoted above.

The Holy Prophet refers to the *Manna* bestowed on the Israelites in the following, ḥadīth. Says he: "The mushroom is one of the things included in the *Manna*, and the sap of it heals the eye" (Bukhārī). He is also reported to have said: "The mushroom is among the things which God bestowed upon Moses, as a free gift" (Muḥīṭ). This shows that God provided the Israelites with a number of things in the wilderness, sometimes with one thing and sometimes with another.

The verse does not mention how the Israelites "wronged themselves". But as God speaks here of the favours bestowed upon them, it is evident that they wronged themselves by showing ingratitude and by murmuring and complaining of their lot in spite of God's special favours. By doing so, however, they did no harm to God or His Messenger, but only harmed their own souls.

### 65. Important Words:

سجدا (submissively) is derived from

سجد which means: (1) he showed submissiveness and humility. The Quran says *ولله يسجد من في السماوات والارض* And to Allah submits whosoever is in the heavens and the earth (13:16); (2) he fell prostrate (Mufradāt). In the verse under comment the word is used in the first mentioned sense; for, besides other reasons pointing to this significance, one cannot pass through a gate while fallen prostrate on the ground.

حطة (forgive us our sins) is derived from حط which means: (1) he descended or came down; (2) he brought down, or caused to fall, or removed a burden, etc. استطح فلانا وزره means, he requested that person to take down or relieve him of his heavy burden (Aqrab). As in theology, to seek relief from a burden is to seek forgiveness of sins, the expression حطة (literally the bringing down of a burden) would mean, remove our burden of sins or forgive us our sins.

نغفر (We shall forgive) is derived from غفر. They say غفر الشيء meaning, he covered or concealed the thing. غفر المتاع means, he put the things in the bag and thus covered and protected them. غفر الله له ذنبه means, God covered up his sin and forgave it. غفر الامر بغفرته means, he rectified or reformed the matter suitably (Aqrab & Lane). غفران and مغفرة both infinitives, signify God's forgiveness or His protection of a person against the punishment of his sins (Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

The Bible is here again at fault and makes no direct mention of this incident. It, however, speaks of a

battle which in those days took place between the Amalekites and the Israelites in Rephidim (Exod. 17:8) which shows that the Amalekites inhabited certain parts of this land. Though the land was a desert, yet here and there habitations were also to be found (Enc. Bib. IV. 4036, 37). In fact, the presence of a desert does not preclude the existence of habitations, because even wandering tribes make here and there small habitations which, serve as meeting places for their scattered clans.

As the Israelites were eager to live in inhabited places owing to the facilities they afforded and owing also to their previous mode of living, they were bidden to go to some neighbouring village where they would combine the life of the desert with that of a habitation and would be free to eat wherever they liked, as is usual in a desert place where there is no private ownership.

But as this change was to bring them in contact with other people and was likely to affect their morals, they were at the same time bidden to be careful about themselves and to be submissive and obedient to God and also to pray to Him that He might forgive them the sins they might commit. If they acted upon this injunction, God would be kind to them and would forgive them their sins. Nay, He would further bestow on those who acted righteously His added favours and blessings.

The words "this village" need not refer to any specified village. According to the Arabic idiom the

60. <sup>a</sup>The transgressors changed *it* for a word other than that which was said to them. So We sent down upon the transgressors a punishment from heaven, because they were disobedient.<sup>66</sup>

#### R. 7.

61. And *remember the time* <sup>b</sup>when Moses prayed for water for his people and We said: 'Strike the rock with thy rod'; and there gushed forth from it twelve springs, *so that* every tribe knew their drinking place. 'Eat and drink of what Allah has

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۖ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ

<sup>a</sup>7:163. <sup>b</sup>7:161.

words may mean "any village that may be near" or "the nearest village".

#### 66. Important Words:

رجز (a punishment) means: (1) filth; (2) punishment; (3) idol-worship (4) iniquity or sin (Aqrah).

من السماء (from heaven). For سماء see note on 2:20. As سماء means a "height" or "anything that is high above us", therefore the expression من السماء would mean "from on high" or "from God", implying that the punishment meted out to the Israelites was not brought about through earthly means but, as it were, descended from above.

#### Commentary:

This verse is a continuation of the previous one. God commanded the Israelites to behave submissively and to pray to Him for the forgiveness of

their sins, but they, mischievous and arrogant as ever, disobeyed the injunctions given to them and changed the words of prayer taught by God, whereupon He chastised them with a punishment that was not of this earth, i.e. He visited them with a pestilence or plague that destroyed a number of them. Or the expression رجز من السماء may mean that their disobedience recoiled on their own souls in the sense of moral degradation and filthiness of heart and mind.

The question of the word which the Israelites used in place of the one taught to them is immaterial. According to some, they used the word حبة or حطة i.e. "give us corn to eat" instead of حطة i.e. "remove our sins" (Bukhārī & Jarīr). The words



provided, and commit not iniquity in the earth, creating disorder.’<sup>67</sup>

وَلَا تَعْتَوُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ<sup>٦٧</sup>

sound alike and afforded a playful opportunity to the mischief-minded among the Israelites. But as already said, the word substituted is not material. What matters is that they, i.e. many of them as the Quran hints, disobeyed the Lord and made religion a plaything. Hence the punishment.

### 67. Important Words:

عصا (rod). عصا الرجل means, he beat the man with a rod. عصا القوم means, he brought together the people, or he made them agree on some matter of common concern. عصا means: (1) a rod strong enough to support the weight of a man; (2) communal and family life; (3) a community; (4) the shin-bone (Aqrab).

الحجر (rock) is from حجر i.e. it prevented or resisted. الحجر means, a stone; a great mass of stone; a rock (Lane).

### Commentary:

This verse mentions another favour bestowed on the Israelites. When once they were hard pressed by thirst and no water was procurable in the desert, God saved them by revealing to Moses the knowledge of a rock from which water flowed out when struck with a rod.

The demand of the Israelites for water and their being supplied with it is mentioned at two places in the Bible. At one place mention is made of the twelve springs of Elim, but nothing is said there of Moses’

striking the rock with his rod (Exod. 15:27). At the other place, Moses, by divine command, struck the rock Horeb with his rod, and there flowed out abundant water with which the Israelites and their animals slaked their thirst (Exod. 17:1-7 Numb. 20:2-11). Here no mention is made of the number of springs. It appears that the Quran refers to the occurrence relating to the rock of Horeb because, with the only difference that the Bible does not give the number of springs whereas the Quran gives a definite number, almost all the details narrated in the Bible concur with the narrative of the Quran. As for the slight difference with regard to the number of springs, reason favours the narrative of the Quran. The Israelites numbered several thousands besides riding animals and beasts of burden, and one spring was certainly insufficient for such a large number, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the thirsty Israelites were, according to the Bible, in a state of extreme exasperation at that time and were prepared even to stone Moses to death. It is possible, however, that at the source there was only one mouth of the spring, but it divided into twelve channels as it flowed down the rock, the number being in conformity with the number of the Israelite tribes.

If at present there is no trace of the twelve springs at that spot, it is no

62. And *remember the time* when you said, ‘O Moses, surely, we will not remain content with one *kind of* food; pray, then, to thy Lord for us that He bring forth for us of what the earth grows—of its herbs and its cucumbers and its wheat and its lentils and its onions’. He said: ‘Would you take in exchange that which is inferior for that which is superior? Go to some town, and there is for you what you ask’. And “they were smitten with abasement and destitution, and

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَمُوسَى لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلَى  
طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ  
لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْتِجُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا  
وَقَتَائِبِهَا وَقُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصِلِهَا<sup>ط</sup>  
قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَى  
بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ<sup>ط</sup> إِهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ  
لَكُمْ مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ<sup>ط</sup> وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ  
الدِّبَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ<sup>ط</sup> وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبِ  
مِّنَ اللَّهِ<sup>ط</sup> ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ

“3:113.

wonder; for it is a matter of common experience that sometimes several springs rising at the same spot have some of their openings closed and cease to flow. From a testimony quoted by Sale, however, it appears that even as late as the end of the fifteenth century, twelve springs actually flowed there. He says: "The rock stands within the border of Arabia and some of his (the Prophet's) countrymen must needs have seen it if he himself had not, as it is most probable he had. And in effect he seems to be in the right. For one who went into those parts in the end of the fifteenth century tells us expressly that the water issued from twelve places of the rock, according to the number of the tribes of Israel" (Al-Koran by Sale, page 8).

The miracle of Moses on this occasion did not lie in bringing about a thing against the known laws of nature, but in the fact that God revealed to him the specific spot where water was just ready to flow at a blow of his rod. It is within the experience of those who study geological conditions in rocky districts that sometimes water flows underneath small hillocks or rocks and gushes forth when the rock is struck with something heavy or pointed.

As *Manna* and *Salwā* had already been bestowed on the Israelites, God now fittingly asks them to *eat and drink of what Allah has provided*. But as a life of ease and independence is likely to make men arrogant and

<sup>a</sup>they incurred the wrath of Allah: that was because they rejected the Signs of Allah and <sup>b</sup>would kill the Prophets unjustly; that was because they rebelled and transgressed.<sup>68</sup>

بِإِتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ  
ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

<sup>a</sup>2:91; 3:113; 5:61. <sup>b</sup>2:88; 3:22, 113, 184; 5:71.

mischievous, God at the same time warns the Israelites to exercise self-restraint and refrain from creating trouble and disorder in the land.

### 68. Important Words:

فومها (its wheat). فوم means: (1) wheat; (2) any corn suitable for making bread; (3) garlic; (4) chick-pea (Aqrab).

مصر (a town) means: (1) a town or a city; (2) the frontier between two countries; (3) the thing that intervenes between two things (Aqrab).

يقتلون (would kill) is derived from قتل i.e. he killed. The infinitive means: (1) killing with a sword or with a stone or with poison or by any other means; (2) attempting to kill; (3) making up the mind to kill; (4) boycotting or cutting off all connections; (5) killing one's carnal desires; (6) weakening the strength of a thing, as alcohol is "killed" with the addition of water, or hunger is "killed" with food, etc.; (7) humbling a person completely; (8) rendering a person like unto one killed either physically or morally or spiritually; (9) acquiring complete and certain knowledge about a thing; and (10) cursing a person or thing (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lisān)

### Commentary:

In this verse another instance is cited to show how the Israelites made no effort to turn the favours of God to good account. When they were in the desert, God sent them *Manna* and *Salwā*. But soon after this they began to exhibit discontent with one kind of food and to clamour for a variety of grain, onions, salad and green-stuff (Num. 11:5-11). It may be noted that both *Manna* and *Salwā* taken together were considered one kind of food as they were taken continuously for a long time. It is further learnt from the Bible that the supply of *Salwā* was discontinued after a while and the Israelites were thus left to live on *Manna* alone (Num. 11:6). As the demand was not based on a right understanding of the wisdom of God Who wanted the Israelites to breathe the free air of the desert for a time, they met with disgrace and drew upon themselves the wrath of God.

God's displeasure with the Israelites was not due to their demand for other food. The real cause lay elsewhere. Having lived for a long time in bondage and a state of dependence, they had become cowardly and indolent. So God

wished them to stay in the desert for sometime, living on game and wild herbs, that they might get rid of their cowardice and indolence by living an independent life in the desert. Thus revitalized, they were to be led to the Promised Land and made rulers of Palestine. The Israelites, however, failed to understand the real purpose of God or having understood it, failed to appreciate it, and foolishly insisted upon living in a town. God pointed out their error, saying that they had asked for a life of agriculture in preference to what was to lead them to sovereignty. He wanted to prepare them for rule over the Promised Land, but they hungered for husbandry. So He indignantly ordered them to go down to a town where they would get the desired things.

The Israelites deserved punishment, because their impatience was the outcome of a want of faith in the promise of God. This lack of faith in God was due to their opposition to His Prophets and, disbelief in His Signs, and they opposed the Prophets because they were transgressors and evildoers. The Prophets invited them to guidance and virtue which they disliked, and, as a result, they opposed them. Thus the Quran admirably traces the causal sequence of every evil to its origin and strikes at its very root so as to prevent all possibility of recurrence.

The words, *we will not remain content with one kind of food*, contain a threat and are full of arrogance. If the Israelites had meant simply to express a wish, the words would have

been "we are unable to remain content with one kind of food," and not as they stand in the Quran. The Bible gives a vivid picture of their insolent and almost rebellious attitude on this occasion (Num. 11:5-15).

The words يقتلون النبيين translated in the verse as "would kill the Prophets" do not mean that the Israelites actually killed the Prophets, because, up to the time of Moses, no Prophet is known to have been slain by them. As a matter of fact, Moses is the first Prophet who was sent to the Israelites as a nation. Thus Moses and his brother, Aaron, are the only persons to whom the words can be applied; but obviously these two Prophets were not killed by the Israelites, although the latter often opposed them and were sometimes even bent upon killing them (Exod. 17:4). Hence, the word قتل in the verse cannot possibly mean actual killing. Its only meaning here is that they severely opposed the Prophets and were even prepared to kill them. This interpretation finds corroboration not only in Arabic lexicons, for which see Important Words, but the Quran itself supports it in a number of verses where the word قتل has been used undoubtedly, not in the sense of actual killing but in that of attempting to kill or intending to kill (3:22 and 40:29). Bukhārī also relates a tradition to the effect that once certain hot-headed Quraish youths brutally assaulted the Holy Prophet in the precincts of the Ka'bah, whereupon Abū Bakr rushed to his rescue, saying, اتقتلون رجلا ان يقول ربى الله "Do you

**R. 8.**

63. "Surely, the Believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians—whichever party *from among these* truly <sup>b</sup>believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds—shall have their reward with their Lord, and <sup>c</sup>no fear *shall come* upon them, nor shall they grieve.<sup>69</sup>

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى  
وَالصَّبِيَّةَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ  
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ  
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:70; 22:18. <sup>b</sup>4:137; 6:93. <sup>c</sup>2:113, 278; 6:49; 10:63.

kill a man because he says Allah is his Lord and Master?" (chapter on *Tafsir*). In this ḥadīth the word قتل is clearly used in the sense of attempting to kill or intending to kill and not actual killing.

It will not be out of place to point out here that the purport of verse 2:59 discussed above is altogether different from the one under comment. Though in both of them God apparently orders the Israelites to go to some habitation, yet the meaning is entirely different, rather quite the opposite in each case. As a matter of fact, whereas in verse 2:59 God Himself willingly commands the Israelites to go to some habitation, His ordering them to "go down into a town" in the verse under comment is expressive of definite displeasure and anger. In the previous verse the قرية or habitation meant only a habitation found in the desert by going into which the Israelites did not leave the free desert life but rather combined it with the facilities of a habitation. On

the contrary, by "going down into" a مصر i.e. a town or city as mentioned in the verse under comment, they altogether abandoned the desert life and adopted a life of ease, as is led in towns and cities. Hence the difference. This is why the Quran uses the simple word ادخلوا i.e. "enter" in 2:59 and the word اهبطوا i.e. "go down", a term expressive of decline, in the verse under comment. Similarly, whereas in verse 2:59 the Quran follows up the commandment with the words *eat therefrom plentifully wherever you like*, in the present verse the commandment is followed by the words *and they were smitten with abasement and destitution*. The difference is apparent. The former expression is indicative of the freedom of life in the desert, and the latter of the suffocating atmosphere and mental slavery of towns and cities.

**69. Important Words:**

الذين آمنوا (The Believers). The expression signifies the people who

profess to be believers in Islam, i.e. the Muslims. Thus إيمان here means only profession of Islam. The word مؤمن has been used in the sense of Muslim elsewhere also in the Quran (4:137).

الذين هادوا (the Jews) means, those who profess the Jewish religion. The word هادوا is derived from هاد which literally means, he turned towards the truth or towards God with repentance (Aqrah). The word also signifies returning towards a thing slowly or walking tardily (Mufradāt).

النصارى (the Christians) is derived from نصر i.e. he helped. As the disciples of Jesus sided with him as God's helpers (3:53), so they came to be known as نصارى i.e. helpers. Or the word is connected with ناصرة (Nazareth), a village which was the scene of Jesus' childhood. In either case نصارى has come to signify the followers of Jesus, i.e. those who profess the Christian religion (Mufradāt).

الصابئين (the Sabians) is derived from صبا. They say صبا الرجل i.e. he forsook one religion and adopted another. صبا النجم means, the star made its appearance (Aqrah). Literally, therefore, صابي is one who forsakes his old religion and adopts a new one. Technically, however, the word الصابئين refers to certain religious sects that were found in parts of Arabia and countries bordering on it. The name was applied to the following faiths: (1) The star-worshipping people living in Mesopotamia (Gibbon's *Roman Empire*, v. 440 and *Murūjudh-Dhahab* by Mas'ūdī and *Enc. Rel.*

*Eth.*, viii, under *Mandaeans*); (2) The faith which was a sort of patch-work of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism (Kathīr, under 2:63); (3) A people who lived near Mosul in Iraq and believed in one God but had no known Law or Book. They claimed to follow the religion of Noah (Jarīr & Kathīr, under 2:63); (4) A people who lived round about Iraq and professed belief in all the Prophets of God and had a special system of prayer and fasting (Kathīr). Some Muslim Jurists looked upon الصابئين as a People of the Book, allowing them the same privileges as are allowed to the latter. None of the above-mentioned peoples should, however, be confused with the Sabaeans (not Sabians) mentioned by certain commentators of the Bible as people inhabiting ancient Yemen. In this connection see also *R. Rel. xl.* 129-132.

من آمن بالله (whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah). Here إيمان means true belief, i.e. the belief which counts true in the sight of God and not merely profession of a certain faith. The Quran uses the word إيمان in this sense in 49:15.

### Commentary:

This verse wedged in among the verses recounting the iniquities of the Israelites seems rather misplaced. But deeper study shows that it has been most fittingly placed here. In fact, the Quran is not a book of stories but has come with the declared object of uplifting those who have fallen morally and spiritually. It follows a psychological order in perfect

conformity with the mental attitude of the reader, interspersing every narrative with fitting hints for his moral and spiritual regeneration. So is the case in this verse. After enumerating certain wrongdoings of the Israelites, the Quran goes on to say that although their sins are great, yet God's mercy is infinitely greater, and if even now the Israelites, or for that matter, Christians, Sabians or any other people, should turn to God and truly and sincerely believe in Him and the Last Day (these being the two fundamental articles of faith which in principle comprise all others) and follow up their belief with good and righteous deeds, they can become heirs to His grace and mercy.

The verse is important and much difference has arisen about its real meaning. Some who are not in the habit of making a deep study of the Quran have hastily jumped to the conclusion that, according to this verse, belief in Islam is not necessary. They say that anybody, whether he is a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or any other, who sincerely believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds will be saved. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Quran emphatically declares in a number of verses that belief in the Holy Prophet and in his revelation is essential. Says God: *Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and desire to make distinction between Allah and His Messengers and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in others,' and desire to take a way in between, these indeed are veritable*

*disbelievers; and We have prepared for the disbelievers an humiliating punishment* (4:151, 152). Again, *And those who believe in the Hereafter believe therein* (i.e. the Quran) *and they strictly observe their Prayers* (6:93). From these two verses it becomes clear beyond any shadow of doubt that according to the Quran (1) belief in the Prophets is part and parcel of belief in God, and (2) belief in the Hereafter includes belief in God's revelation as well. Elsewhere the Quran says, *Surely the true religion with Allah is Islam (complete submission) and whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the life to come he shall be among the losers* (3:20, 86). This verse along with the two quoted above definitely proves that the objection mentioned above is entirely baseless and is born of utter ignorance of the real Quranic teachings. In fact, as explained in the above verses, the Quran confines itself to a mention of belief in God and the Last Day, not because belief in the Holy Prophet and the Quran is not essential, but because the former two beliefs include the latter two, the four being essentially inseparable.

What is, then, the real meaning of the verse under comment? A careful study of the verse and its context leaves no doubt that it can have only two possible meanings:

(1) One meaning is that, having recounted a number of wrongs committed by the Israelites, God invites them to an easy and decisive method of establishing which party

has His support and which not, and in order to make the argument still more forceful, He includes in the proposed context Jews, Christians and Sabians, the only followers of revealed religions found in and around Arabia. It is evident that in religious matters, when everything else has been said and every other means has been tried, the final criterion for testing the truth of contesting parties is reduced to this: Which party enjoys divine succour and which does not? If God is a Living God and has Himself raised a Prophet for the regeneration of the world, it stands to reason that He would not leave His Messenger alone but would come to his help and show powerful Signs in his support. This phenomenon has repeated itself in the time of each and every Prophet of God. So why not make use of it here in order to distinguish the truth from falsehood? It is to this phase of the matter that the verse under comment invites Jews, Christians, etc. God says, there are now as many as four claimants in the field, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. So let all wait and see whom God's helping hand succours in the present struggle. In the time of Moses God helped the Israelites against the Egyptians; in the time of Jesus He helped Christians against their opponents, and in, the time of other Prophets He helped their followers against their enemies, and this served as a practical proof of the fact that the truth lay with the Prophets and not with their opponents. The same tried criterion was now available, viz.,

*whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah and the Last Day shall have their reward with their Lord and no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.* The challenge was thrown out to all existing claimants of divine support and the final and unparalleled triumph of Islam against all adversaries gave the clearest of verdicts in favour of the former.

The verse under comment thus contains a mighty prophecy the fulfilment of which in the teeth of all opposition was a wonderful proof of the truth of Islam. And the fulfilment of this prophecy proves to be the more wonderful when one bears in mind the fact that this verse was revealed at a time (it was revealed in the early years of the Hijrah) when Islam was passing through the severest of trials and hardships, and the fate of the new faith was virtually trembling in the balance; nay, so far as worldly causes were concerned, its fate was practically sealed in view of the opposition that remains unparalleled in all history.

It cannot be objected here that after a few centuries of triumph, Muslims too began to decline, thus rendering the argument ineffective. *Firstly*, the argument, as borne out by the history of all revealed religions' of the world, does not relate to communities in their ordinary temporal affairs but to those contending on religious issues. The argument particularly relates to the time when a Divine Messenger makes his appearance and extends to the period for which a newborn



community sticks to the teachings of their Prophet. It would be absurd to think that divine succour should continue forever, even after a people has become dead in faith and works. *Secondly*, it should be remembered that the present-day decline of Muslims as well as the present-day temporal ascendancy of Christians is itself in accordance with the prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and hence it is rather a proof of the truth of Islam than a proof against it. Moreover, the wheel is fast turning and the day is not far off when, according to yet another prophecy of the Holy Prophet, Islam will once more gain ascendancy through the Promised Messiah of whom the Prophet himself has spoken as his own image.

(2) The other meaning relates to the spiritual sense. God says, there are now four claimants in the field, i.e. Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. Each one of these groups claims to enjoy true spiritual contact with God. But as everything in this world possesses certain distinguishing marks and properties which go to establish its identity, so is the case with man's spiritual connection with God which is characterized by certain distinguishing marks or special properties; and the verse goes on to say that one of these distinguishing marks is that people enjoying true spiritual connection with God "have their reward with their Lord and no fear comes upon them nor do they grieve," i.e. God's connection brings with it perfect peace of mind and complete

tranquillity of heart. One is not left in the dark, doubting all the time in the depth of his heart whether one is treading the right path or not, with gnawing grief at one's past actions and disquieting fears about the future. The heavenly life of a true believer begins in this very world, and this is why the Quran says that a person truly related to God inherits two Heavens, one in this world and the other in the next (55:47). So in the verse under comment. God invites the different claimants to search in their hearts for the peace and tranquillity of mind attending true belief and then say whether they possess it.

Yet another significance of the verse is that lip-profession of a truth is nothing in the sight of God. The Jews professed the truth; but as it did not find its way into their hearts, they stumbled at every step and brought down God's displeasure on their heads. The verse forcefully points out that it did not matter whether one was apparently a Jew, a Christian, a Sabian or, for that matter, a Muslim. If the faith was confined only to the lip, it was a dead thing, without life and without any motive power in it. In order to be really useful and to become really acceptable in the sight of God, ایمان or faith should not be a mere lip-profession but something rooted deep in the heart with living and healthy branches spreading all around. This was a principle of which even the newborn community of Islam needed to be constantly reminded.

As stated under Important Words,

64. And *remember the time* when <sup>a</sup>We took a covenant from you and <sup>b</sup>raised high above you the Mount, *saying*, 'Hold fast that which We have given you and bear in mind what is therein, that you may be saved.'<sup>70</sup>

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ  
الطُّورَ ۚ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ  
وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:84, 94; 4:155. <sup>b</sup>7:172.

the name الصَّابِئِينَ has been applied to a number of peoples, and it may rightly apply to one or all of them. In fact, the larger the number, the greater the force of the argument contained in the verse.

### 70. Important Words:

ميثاق (covenant) is derived from وثق i.e. it was or became firm and established. اوثقه means, he made it firm and fast; he bound or tied it firmly and strongly. ميثاق means, a firmly made promise; a covenant (Aqrab & Lane). It should be noted that every commandment of God has the force of a covenant for those who believe, because once an individual or a people believe in God and accept His guidance, they, as it were, enter into a covenant with Him that they will obey all His Commandments, a formal agreement not being necessary. See also 2:28.

رفعا (We raised high) is derived from رفع which means, he raised or lifted a thing or person; he raised a person in rank, honour, position or dignity; he took a report or complaint to a person in authority (Mufradāt & Aqrab). It also means, to make a thing tower

above another standing beside it. We read in a ḥadīth رفع لنا صخرة طويلة لها ظل i.e. a big stone giving good shade was raised above us, i.e. we found ourselves beside a high shady stone (Bukhārī, ch. on Hijrah).

فوق (above) is derived from فوق meaning, he surpassed it or him; he stood higher than it or him. Thus فوق is the opposite of "beneath" meaning "above", both literally and figuratively (Aqrab). It is also used to denote a place higher than that which one is occupying. The Quran says: اذ جاءوكم من فوقكم i.e. when the enemy made a descent on you from a higher position (33:11).

الطور (the Mount) means: (1) a hill or mountain; (2) the mount Ṭūr or Sinai (Mufradāt & Aqrab). Thus, it is both a common and a proper name.

### Commentary:

In this verse the Quran again reverts to the previous subject, i.e. the iniquities of the Israelites, but in a different field. The verse refers to the time when Moses went up the Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and left his followers standing at the foot of the

65. Then you turned back thereafter; and had it not been for Allah's grace towards you and His mercy, you would surely have been of the losers.<sup>71</sup>

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ  
اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ  
الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Mount (Exod. 19:17). So the covenant spoken of in the verse refers to the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on this occasion.

The clause *We raised high above you the Mount*, does not mean that Mount Sinai was physically lifted up to hang over the heads of the Israelites. It only means that the covenant was taken at a time when the Israelites were standing at the foot of the mountain—a meaning quite consistent with the Arabic idiom as explained under Important Words. The raising of the Mount above the Israelites has been ascribed to God, because it was He Who had commanded them to come and stand at the foot of the Mount.

The verse may also refer to the scene when the Mount Sinai was terribly shaken with an earthquake, while the Israelites were camping near it (Exod. 19:18). On such an occasion the shaking of a high mountain peak appears as if it were hanging over the heads of those standing near it.

### 71. Important Words:

فضل (grace) is derived from the verb فضل meaning: (1) it remained, the expression being used when a portion remains out of a larger number or quantity, the rest being given away or

consumed; (2) it was in excess, or it was over and above a certain measure. Thus the noun فضل means: (1) something that is in excess or additional; (2) abundance; (3) a free gift, the giving of which is not obligatory on the giver; (4) a favour or grace or bounty (Aqrab & Lane). The word فضل is generally, though not always, spoken of such favours as pertain to temporal or worldly things (e.g. 62:11). See also the word رحمة below.

رحمة (mercy) is derived from رحم meaning (1) he showed mercy or compassion; (2) he was kind or tender; (3) he was beneficent; (4) he forgave. Thus رحمة means, mercy or compassion or kindness or tenderness or beneficence or forgiveness or inclination to show one of these. As رحم (rihm) means the womb of a woman, the word رحمة would further give the significance of tenderness or compassion as shown by a mother (Lane). رحمة in contrast to فضل (for which see above) is generally spoken of such acts of God's kindness or mercy as relate to religious or spiritual matters. This is why the Holy Prophet has instructed his followers to ask for God's رحمة when entering a mosque for Prayers, and for His فضل when coming out of it after Prayers (Tirmidhī).

66. And surely, you have known *the end* of those amongst you, who transgressed in the matter of <sup>a</sup>the Sabbath. So We said to them: <sup>b</sup>'Be ye apes, despised.'<sup>72</sup>

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي  
السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:48, 155; 7:164; 16:125. <sup>b</sup>5:61; 7:167.

### Commentary:

After receiving God's commandments on the Mount, the Israelites, instead of strengthening their connection with the Lord, showed laxity and carelessness in observing His behests (Num. 11:1); but as God wanted to uplift them and bestow His grace and mercy on them in matters temporal as well as spiritual, He forgave them their sins and saved them from being the losers.

### 72. Important Words:

السبت (the Sabbath) is derived from سبت meaning: (1) he rested.; (2) he cut or broke a thing; (3) he shaved his hair; (4) he observed the Sabbath. The noun سبت (Sabbath) signifies that day of the week which is observed as a sacred day in which no worldly work is done (Aqrab & Mufradāt). Among the Jews, Saturday was (and still is) observed as a sacred day which was passed in joyfulness and rest from work as well as in contemplation, sacrifice, holy convocation, etc. (Jew. Enc. under "Sabbath").

قردة (apes) is the plural of القرد (the ape) which is derived from the verb قرد meaning, he clove to the ground; he lay in dust. اقرد means, he was or became abject or mean. القرادة means, apes or monkeys (Lane).

خاسئين (despised) is the plural of خاسى which is derived from خسأ. They say

خسأ الكلب i.e. the dog moved away as a result of being driven away; خسأ الرجل means, the man drove away the dog, despising it. Thus the word is both transitive and intransitive. الخاسى means, one who moves away despised by others or one who is spurned by others (Aqrab). الخاسى of which the plural is خاسئين is a word which, according to the rules of Arabic grammar, is used about rational beings only, the word used with regard to animals being خاسئة.

### Commentary:

The verse speaks of the Sabbath and its violation by the Israelites. It is pointed out that God's covenant made it binding on the Israelites, among other things, to keep the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8-11), i.e. observe Saturday as a sacred day devoted to spiritual joyfulness and holy convocation, etc. but, recalcitrant as usual, some among them violated the sanctity of the Sabbath and did not observe it, which brought on them God's wrath, disgrace and humiliation (Neh. 13:15-18 & Jer. 17:21-23). The violation of the Sabbath was a great sin, inasmuch as it indicated that the Israelites wanted to remain engrossed in worldly affairs and did not like to pay any heed to religion, not even for a single day out of a whole week.

It is wrong to infer from the word

67. Thus We made it <sup>a</sup>an example to those of its time and to those who came after it, and a lesson to those who fear God.<sup>73</sup>

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَآبَيْنِ يَدَيَّهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا  
وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:39.

قردة (apes) that the profaners of the Sabbath were actually transformed into apes. The incident has been related by the Quran in two other places (5:61, 62 and 7:167-169) and even a cursory study of these verses would show that these people did not actually turn into apes. The word "apes" has been used figuratively meaning that they became abject and mean, like monkeys, the transformation being not in body or form but in character and spirit.

A further proof of this is to be found in the fact that it is a general rule of Arabic grammar that the suffix *ون* or *ين* is added to the plurals of such words as refer to rational beings only. In conformity with this rule, the qualifying word used in the verse about قردة *خاسئين* which shows that the قردة (apes) here alludes not to irrational but to rational beings, i.e. human beings who had developed the character of apes. Had the Quran meant their actual transformation into apes, it would have used the form *خاسئة* and not *خاسئين*.

Many learned commentators of the past have also held the above view. For instance, Mujāhid who is considered to be one of the greatest commentators of the Quran, being one of the تابعين (the immediate successors of the Holy Prophet's Companions) says: "They were not actually transformed into apes; only

their hearts were changed. God has used the expression figuratively" (Kathīr). Other eminent authorities have also held the same view, interpreting the words قردة خاسئين (apes despised) as اذلة صاغرين i.e. "abject and humiliated men".

By using the word قردة (apes) about a section of the Jews, God means to point to the fact that just as apes or monkeys are an abject and despised species which, in spite of possessing, in an extraordinary degree, the habit of mimicking or copying others—a habit which, if well directed, should result in progress—ever remain where they are, as if going about in a circle and making no headway at all, similarly the Jews will always remain humiliated in the world, and in spite of wonderful resources in wealth and education will never be able to gain any stronghold on the earth. It is interesting to note that, as explained under Important Words, even in the root meaning of the word قردة there is the sense of abjectness and humiliation as well as that of grovelling in the dust. And what is still more interesting is the fact that, of all the animals found in the world, the advanced people of the West should think of man having descended from the ape.

### 73. Important Words:

نكال (an example) is derived from نكل.

68. And *remember* when Moses said to his people, ‘Allah commands you to slaughter a cow,’ they said: ‘Dost thou make a jest of us?’ He said, ‘I seek refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant.’<sup>74</sup>

69. They said, ‘Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what she is.’ He answered, ‘God says, it is a cow, neither old nor young, full-grown, between the two; now do what you are commanded.’<sup>75</sup>

70. They said: ‘Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what colour she is.’ He

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ  
أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا  
هُزُوًا ۖ قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ  
الْجَاهِلِينَ ۝٧٤

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ ۖ  
قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا فَارِصٌ وَلَا  
بِكْرٌ ۖ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ ۖ فَافْعَلُوا مَا  
تُؤْمَرُونَ ۝٧٥

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا ۖ  
قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ

They say نكل بفلان i.e. he inflicted on him such a punishment as to make him an example for others (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

All punishment, if wisely directed, should serve a twofold purpose: (1) to inflict pain on the offender so as to make him reform in future; (2) to make it a lesson for others so that they may beware of falling into a similar error. But, as the latter part of the verse points out, only such men benefit by punishment as are God-fearing.

### 74. Important Words:

هزوا (a jest) means: (1) jest; (2) the object or butt of a joke (Lisān). See also 2:14.

### Commentary:

Here begins an account of another Israelite wrong which was allied to their worship of the calf. Though the calf mentioned in 2:52 was destroyed, yet veneration for the cow lingered in their hearts. The verse, along with those that follow, will be explained under verse 72 below.

### 75. Important Words:

فارض (old) is derived from فرض. They say فرضت البقرة meaning, the cow became old (Lane).

عوان (full-grown) is derived from عان. They say عانت المرأة i.e. the woman attained middle age. So عوان is said of one that has attained middle age. الحرب العوان means, the hottest and bloodiest part of a battle (Aqrah).

answered, ‘*God* says, it is a cow of a dun colour, pure and rich *in tone*; delighting the beholders.’<sup>76</sup>

71. They said, ‘Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what she is, for *all such* cows appear to us alike; and if Allah please, we shall indeed be guided.’<sup>77</sup>

72. He answered: ‘*God* says, it is a cow <sup>a</sup>not broken in to plough the earth or water the tilth; one without blemish; of one colour.’ They said, ‘Now hast thou brought the truth’. Then they slaughtered her, though they would rather not do so.<sup>78</sup>

فَاقْعَ ثَوْنَهَا تَسْرُ النَّظِيرَيْنِ ٧٠

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ  
الْبَقَرَ تَشْبَهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
لَمُهْتَدُونَ ٧١

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولَ تُثِيرُ  
الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا  
شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا لَنْ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ ط  
فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ٧٢

<sup>a</sup>67:16.

### Commentary:

See under 2:72.

### 76. Important Words:

صفراء (of a dun colour) is the feminine from أصفر which signifies a thing having the colour of gold; yellow-coloured or saffron-coloured (Aqrab).

ناعم (pure and rich) is derived from ناع which means: (1) it was of a rich, pure and unmixed colour; or (2) its golden colour was rich and pure. ناعم means: (1) possessing pure and rich colour; (2) possessing rich and pure golden colour. Thus it is both general and particular (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

See under 2:72.

### 77. Important Words:

البقر (cows) is the plural of البقرة (a cow). The word is used for both male and female (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

See under 2:72.

### 78. Commentary:

The Israelites had lived for a long time among the Egyptians who had great veneration for the cow. Thus reverence for the cow had crept into the minds of the Israelites as well. This is why, when they made an idol for themselves, they made it in the shape of a calf (Quran 2:52 & Exod. 32:4). It was, therefore, quite in the fitness of things that, in order to root out this evil inclination from the

**R. 9.**

73. And *remember the time* when you slew a person and differed among yourselves about it; and Allāh would bring to light what you concealed.<sup>79</sup>

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادْرَأَتْكُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ  
مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

hearts of the Israelites, they should have been repeatedly commanded to sacrifice the cow. And this was actually the case (Num. 19:1-9; Lev. 4:1-21; 16:3, 11; etc.) A nation which freely slaughters an animal can never think of deifying it.

In the verses under comment, i.e. vv. 68 to 72, mention is made of Moses having ordered the Israelites to sacrifice a cow. It appears that at first they were bidden to sacrifice an ordinary cow, but it seems they had a particular cow which served as a pet among them and they had a natural misgiving that the order pertained to that cow. So they repeatedly asked Moses to specify the cow which God meant to be slaughtered, and as a result of their questionings some conditions were added to specify the animal. Finally, when the description given by Moses corresponded to the particular cow which they had in view, they had perforce to say, *Now hast thou brought the truth*, the words showing that from the very beginning they had in their mind some particular cow to which they thought the command pertained. Caught in their own net, they were guided aright and had to slaughter the very cow which served as a pet among them and thus a great step was taken to

uproot the evil from their hearts.

This incident finds mention in the Bible also (Num. 19:1-9). The Quranic version, however, differs slightly from that of the Bible. According to the Quran, the Israelites were at first ordered to slaughter an ordinary cow, and it was only on their repeated questioning that descriptions were added to specify it. On the other hand, the Biblical version makes no mention of this questioning, but tells us that at the very outset the Israelites were ordered to slaughter a cow answering a particular description. Again, the narrative of the Quran, shows that it was with great reluctance that the Israelites finally complied with the command, but the Bible throws no light on the manner in which the divine behest was carried out. It is not difficult to see on which side the truth lies. It is too much to believe that the Israelites, who were ever ready to quarrel with Moses on receipt of an injunction against their wishes, should have carried out, without question, the order relating to the slaughter of a cow.

**79. Important Words:**

قتلتم (you slew) is derived from قتل which means: (1) he killed; (2) he attempted to kill; (3) he rendered a



74. Then, We said: ‘Smite him (the murderer) for a part of *the offence against him* (the murdered person).’ Thus “Allah gives life to the dead and shows you His Signs that you may understand.”<sup>80</sup>

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُخَيِّ اللَّهُ  
الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:180.

person like unto one killed (see also 2:62).

نفساً (a person) has been used here as نكرة i.e. in an indefinite or undefined form. It may, according to the rules of the Arabic language, refer either to an unimportant person that need not be named, or to a very important personage; for sometimes a word used as نكرة denotes a sense of greatness (Muṭawwal).

فأدارءتم (differed among yourselves) is derived from دارأ meaning, he repelled it or he thrust it back. ادارءتم is originally تدارءتم meaning: (1) you repelled one another by casting blame or responsibility on one another; (2) you disagreed or differed among yourselves (Aqrab & Lane).

تكتُمون (you concealed). See 2: 34.

### Commentary:

See under next verse.

### 80. Important Words:

الموتى (the dead, i.e. dead persons) is the plural of ميت (a dead person) which means: (1) one really dead; (2) one like dead (3) one dying or nearing death (Lane). See also under 2:20, 2:29 & 2:57.

### Commentary:

In the preceding verses God related some of the misdeeds of the Israelites in order to bring home to them the fact that, in face of such conduct on their part, it was idle to expect that God would continue to bestow favours on them. In the verses under comment i.e. 2:73, 74, 75, God recounts one of their final misdeeds which filled the cup of their iniquity to overflowing and sealed their fate.

The Quran has not named the person slain, but when read with the context and the relevant facts of history, the verses appear to apply to the murder of a Companion of the Holy Prophet by the Jews at Medina. Following are some of the details of the incident which was the first public act of enmity perpetrated by the Medinite Jews against Muslims.

The Holy Prophet, on his arrival at Medina, entered into a treaty with the Jews. But the growing prosperity and success of Islam gradually roused the jealousy of the Jewish leaders and some of them began secretly to incite their people against the Muslims. The

crisis came with the Battle of Badr when the jealousy of the Jews reached its highest pitch. The result was that the Jews were emboldened and assumed a highly insolent attitude towards Islam. A short time after the said battle, a Muslim lady happened to go to a Jew's shop to make some purchases. The shopkeeper and the other Jews sitting at the shop behaved very insultingly toward her, and the shopkeeper mischievously fastened the lower part of her mantle to the upper part thereof with a thorn so that when, being unable to bear their insults, she unsuspectingly rose to depart, part of her body became naked, at which the shopkeeper and other Jews burst out laughing. This made the helpless lady cry for help. A Muslim happened to be near. Hearing her cry, he rushed to the place and in the fight that ensued the shopkeeper was killed, whereupon the Jews fell upon the Muslim and murdered him and the situation threatened to develop into a sort of a riot. This happened towards the close of the second year of the Hijrah. It is with reference to this murder that the preceding verse says, *and remember the time when you slew a person and differed among yourselves about it*. The Jews differed among themselves about the murder, for none of them admitted that he had committed it, though all adopted a highly insulting attitude towards the Holy Prophet when he exhorted the Jewish leaders to fear God and abstain from jeopardising the peace of the city. The

result was ongoing enmity between the Jewish tribe of Banū Qainuqā' and the Muslims culminating in the banishment of the tribe from Medina (Hishām, Ṭabarī & Zurqānī).

But the real responsibility lay on the ringleader of the Medinite Jews—Ka'b bin Ashraf—who had taken a leading part in inciting the Jewish tribes and kindling their hatred against the Muslims. The man was looked upon as their leader by the Jews of the whole of Arabia. He was a very rich man and a poet of eminence. Ka'b was also a party to the treaty which was concluded between the Jews and the Holy Prophet on the arrival of the latter in Medina. Inwardly, however, he harboured deep hatred against Islam and its Holy Founder which grew in intensity as Islam made progress. When the Muslims won a decisive victory at Badr, Ka'b, realizing that Islam was taking a deep root in the soil, thought it imperative to make strenuous efforts to extirpate the new faith. So he at once started for Mecca and there, with the aid of his powerful eloquence and stirring verses, set ablaze the fire of enmity and hatred that was already smouldering in the hearts of the Quraish, and with the skirts of the sacred curtain of the Ka'bah in their hands, he made them take a solemn oath that they would know no rest until they had destroyed Islam and its Founder. Thereafter he toured among other tribes of Arabia and stirred them up against the Prophet and the small

body of his followers. Having lighted up the fire of hatred and enmity throughout the land, he returned to Medina and began to create mischief by making scurrilous poems in which mention was made of Muslim women and the ladies nearly related to the Holy Prophet, in the most offensive language. These verses were widely published and were publicly recited by the enemies of Islam. The result of these tactics was that feelings of extreme hatred were excited in the minds of the Jews who assumed an openly hostile attitude to the Holy Prophet and his Companions, throwing to the winds their treaty obligations. It was this attitude of the Jews which emboldened them to commit such offences as the one referred to above, in open defiance of the terms of the treaty they had concluded with the Holy Prophet on his arrival at Medina (Hishām, Zurqānī & Dāwūd).

Thus the real culprit responsible for the assassination of the Muslim referred to above was no other than Ka'b bin Ashraf, the bold and wicked Jewish leader, who had instigated the Jews to rebellion and breach of contract. He even did not hesitate to plot against the life of the Holy Prophet (Zurqānī). His guilt was an established fact. He was guilty of high treason against the State and was the arch-enemy of peace. So he was put to death by the Prophet's command in the third year of Hijrah. It is to this sentence of death that the present verse refers when it says: *then We*

*said, "Smite him (the murderer, i.e. the real culprit) for a part of the offence against him (the murdered person)"*, which meant that the sentence of death was only a partial punishment of the offence, the rest of the punishment being reserved for the Hereafter. In fact, there are certain sins which are atoned for by the punishment which is inflicted for them on the offender in this world. But the offence of wilfully killing an innocent man and particularly one who is a righteous servant of the Lord, is not adequately punished with the execution of the murderer, which is only a partial punishment. The real punishment of such an offence is Hell (4:94).

By using the word قتلتم (you slew) in the plural number, the Quran hints that the whole Jewish community of Medina was responsible for it. For the sentence of death, however, the ringleader, who had brought about a tense atmosphere of hatred and enmity, was selected.

The clause, *thus Allah gives life to the dead*, signifies that retaliation is an effective form of giving life to the dead, for punishing the offender prevents the would-be assassins from committing further murders, and thus many who would otherwise have been victims of assassination are saved. That retaliation is a sure means of giving life is clearly alluded to in the Quran itself. We read in 2:180, *and there is life for you in the law of retaliation, O men of understanding*.

Finally, it may be noted that these verses have also been applied to the

75. Then <sup>a</sup>your hearts became hardened after that, till they were like stones or harder still; for of stones indeed there are some out of which gush forth streams, and of them there are some out of which flows water when they cleave asunder. And indeed of them there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.<sup>81</sup>

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ  
كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ قَسْوَةً ۖ وَإِنَّ مِنْ  
الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ وَإِنَّ  
مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشْقُقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ ۖ وَإِنَّ  
مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا اللَّهُ  
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:14; 6:44; 57:17.

attempted murder of Jesus by the Jews (for which see Part I of the Quran published by Anjuman Taraqqi Islam, Qadian, in 1916), but recent research strongly supports the above explanation. It may also be noted that the interpretation put on this verse by some commentators that a physically dead person was restored to life is quite erroneous, being unsupported by the context of the verse as well as the authentic teaching of Islam. It is a mere legend which has no foundation in fact.

### 81. Important Words:

يشق (cleave asunder) which is originally يتشقق is derived from شق meaning, he cut it open or he clove it.

تشق means, it clove or broke asunder (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The murder of the innocent Muslim referred to in the preceding verses sealed the fate of the Medinite Jews

who thereafter became more and more hardened, their hearts becoming like stones or even worse.

The verse goes on to say that even lifeless things like stones are useful, but the Jews, although rational beings possessing understanding and descended from holy men, have become so hardened as virtually to become worse than stones. Stones have functions to perform; but as they possess no volition, their work can bring them no reward. Deeds are in fact of two kinds, *firstly* those which are performed through volition or exercise of will, and *secondly* those which are performed not through volition but under some natural law. According to Islam, it is only the deeds of the former class that bring reward; but the deeds of the latter class, though unable to bring a reward, are also sometimes useful. Most of the Jews, however, had become so depraved that, far from

76. Do you expect that they will believe you when a party of them hear the word of Allah, then <sup>a</sup>pervert it after they have understood it, and they know *the consequences thereof*.<sup>82</sup>

أَقْتَضَمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ  
فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ  
يَحْرِفُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوا وَهُمْ  
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:79; 4:47; 5:14, 42.

performing any act of virtue out of a desire to be virtuous, they did not even involuntarily perform anything that might be called virtuous. They had become worse than stones; for even from stones there comes out water which people profit by.

It has, however, been added that these remarks do not apply to the whole nation; for some of the Israelites were, no doubt, swayed by the fear of God. Of these the Quran says: *Of them (the hearts) there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah*. It may be noted that the pronoun هما (them) in the clause, *and indeed of them there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah*, stands for قلوب (hearts) and not for حجارة (stones). The fact that of the two pronouns in the verse the first refers to حجارة (stones) and this one to قلوب (hearts) need not create any doubt. The Quran contains many instances of what is termed انتشار ضمائر i.e. where similar pronouns occurring in the same verse stand for different nouns. For example, we read in 48:10: *That you may believe in Allah and His Messenger and may help him and honour him, and glorify Him morning and evening*. In this verse the

pronoun 'him' refers to the Holy Prophet in the first two places and to God in the third.

The sentence, *for of stones indeed there are some out of which gush forth streams, and of them there are some out of which flows water when they cleave asunder*, signifies that even among lifeless things there are grades, some being more useful than others; and the Quran hints that we should recognise the difference in the grade and usefulness of all things. Everything must have its due, whether small or great.

## 82. Important Words:

يَحْرِفُونَ (they pervert it) is derived from حرف which means, he turned a thing aside; he made a thing incline away, the infinitive حرف meaning the side or border of a thing. حرف القول means: (1) he changed or removed a word or speech or writing from its proper place; (2) he made a word or speech or writing incline from its position so as to give it a wrong significance (Aqrab & Mufradât). Thus تحريف may be either by (1) omitting or adding or changing a word or sentence; or by (2) perverting or putting a wrong interpretation on it.

77. And <sup>a</sup>when they meet those who believe, they say: ‘We believe,’ and when they meet one another in private, they say, ‘Do you inform them of what Allah has unfolded to you, that they may thereby argue with you before your Lord? Will you not then understand?’<sup>83</sup>

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا  
وَإِذَا خَلَا بِبَعْضِهِمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ قَالُوا  
اتَّخَذُوا لَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
لِيَحْجُبُوا عَنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا  
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:15; 3:120; 5:62.

### Commentary:

The verse is addressed to Muslims. The Israelites having been reduced to such a condition as to have become hardened like stones or even worse, Muslims cannot expect them to subscribe to their belief or act faithfully to them. The Israelites had become utterly devoid of faith and all sense of honesty. They would hear the word of God revealed to the Holy Prophet and when they went back to their people, they would wilfully pervert it and thus try to mislead them and turn them against the Holy Prophet and his followers by means of deliberate misrepresentation. Nothing good can be expected from such people and nothing can prevent them from breaking agreements and their plighted word.

### 83. Important Words:

فتح (has unfolded) means: (1) he opened; (2) he unfolded or disclosed; (3) he taught; (4) he gained victory over a place or a people (Aqrah).

عند (before) gives a number of

meanings, e.g., with, by, at, near, in the presence of, in the opinion of or in the estimation of, etc. (Lane). See also 2:275.

### Commentary:

The verse mentions another class of Jews who acted hypocritically. When they mixed with Muslims, they chimed in with them from worldly motives, confirming the prophecies contained in their Books about the Holy Prophet. But when they were away from Muslims and mixed with their own people, they behaved in quite a different way. On such occasions other members of the community would reproach them for their enlightening the Muslims on what God had revealed to them, i.e., for letting the Muslims know the prophecies about the Holy Prophet contained in the Jewish scriptures. In that case, they would say, the Muslims would argue with them before God, blaming them before Him on the Day of Judgement for their rejection of the Holy Prophet. And yet they well knew the

78. Do they not know that  
 "Allah knows what they conceal  
 and what they disclose?"<sup>84</sup>

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسْرُونَ  
 وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

79. And some of them are  
 illiterate; they know not the  
 Book but *their own* false  
 notions and they do nothing but  
 conjecture.<sup>85</sup>

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا  
 أَمَانِي وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>11:6; 35:39.

prophecies which spoke of his advent and bore witness to his truth. That there will be such contentions on the Day of Judgement has also been mentioned elsewhere in the Quran which says: *Then surely on the Day of Resurrection you will contend with one another in the presence of your Lord* (39:32). It is a weakness of human nature that a culprit, even when knowing that the judge knows the truth, tries to put up pleas in his favour. Moreover, there is a sect among the Jews who, against the teachings of their own scriptures, hold that God does not know the details of all things, and quite possibly those who reproached their brethren for disclosing such prophecies to the Muslims held a similar view and feared lest the latter should place these facts before God on the Day of Resurrection and blame them in the presence of their Lord.

#### 84. Commentary:

The verse points out that the Jews know that their own scriptures teach that God knows both what is hidden and what is disclosed (Jer. 16:17;

Dan. 2:22). So even if they do not disclose their prophecies to the Muslims, God knows the whole truth and He will judge accordingly.

#### 85. Important Words:

اميون (illiterate persons) is the plural of اى which means, one who can neither write nor read. The word is said to have been derived from ام (mother), for an اى (illiterate person) continues, as it were, the same as when born of his mother (Aqrab). اى also signifies: (1) one not having a revealed Scripture; (2) one belonging to the Arab nation (Lane).

اماني (false notions) derived from مئى is the plural of امنية meaning: (1) a desire; (2) an object of desire; (3) falsehood; (4) reading or recitation (Aqrab).

#### Commentary:

There is yet a third class among the Jews who have no knowledge of the Book at all. They have only their own false notions or desires, and, instead of trying to understand the Book and basing their faith on conviction, they depend upon their own whims. Their

80. Woe, therefore, to those who write the book with their own hands, and then say, 'This is from Allah,' that they may take for it <sup>a</sup>a paltry price. Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.<sup>86</sup>

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ  
بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ  
لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا  
كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا  
يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:175; 3:200; 13:27.

knowledge is not based on God's Book. They rather twist the Book according to their own vain desires and false notions. It is a case of the wish being father to the thought. As the word also means, reading or recitation, the verse in this sense would mean that the Jews only know the letter of the Law and have lost all contact with its spirit. They read the Book but do not understand it.

### 86. Important Words:

ويل (woe) means: (1) the coming or befalling of some calamity, misfortune or sorrow; (2) punishment; (3) perdition. The expression ويل له or ويله or ويلك or ويل لك etc. is used as a warning for some coming sorrow or misfortune (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

There were Jews who composed books or parts thereof and then gave them out as the word of God. This malpractice was common among the Jews and other peoples. Therefore, in addition to the canonical Books of the Bible, there are a number of books which are supposed to be revealed, so that it has now become impossible to

distinguish the revealed Books from those not revealed. Another malpractice of the Jews was that they distorted the meaning of the Divine Word. They themselves wrote a whole book or part thereof and declared it to be based on Biblical evidence; while, as a matter of fact, it was opposed to this evidence. Those responsible for this were responsible not only for their own misdeeds, namely, fabricating and distorting the Word of God, but also for the misdeeds of their followers who were led by their example to commit one or all of the following acts (1) tampering with the Word of God (2:76); (2) preferring worldliness to religion (2:77); and (3) following their own vain desires and false notions (2:79). Hence, while speaking of them, the Quran uses the word ويل (woe) in order to warn them and remind them of the seriousness of their offence.

Some Christian writers have argued that the verse under comment proves that the Jewish and Christian scriptures were intact at the time of the Holy Prophet. This inference is



81. And they say, <sup>a</sup>“The Fire shall not touch us except for a *small* number of days.’ Say, <sup>b</sup>‘Have you taken a promise from Allah? Then, Allah will never break His promise. Or, do you say of Allah what you know not?’<sup>87</sup>

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا  
مَعْدُودَةً ۖ قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا  
فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ۚ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى  
اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:25; 5:19. <sup>b</sup>54:44.

absolutely unjustified. For tampering with the text does not necessarily mean tampering with a genuine text. One who tampers with a version of a false book which he believes to be true is as liable to blame as the one who tampers with a genuine scripture. Hence, the warning to the People of the Book against tampering with the Bible cannot be cited as proof of the existence of the true Bible at the time of the Holy Prophet.

The words, *paltry price*, do not mean that the taking of a good price would be lawful. The words have been used to point out that whatever price they may take would be paltry in view of the great loss they would be suffering thereby. Elsewhere, the Quran says: *the benefit of this world is little* (4:78).

In the last clause the Quran repeats the words, *Woe to them*, twice, saying: *Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn*. This is to point out that by so doing the Israelites are committing two offences: (1) writing down a thing falsely and (2) doing it with the

intention of earning some worldly benefit. As the offence is double, the punishment also will be double.

### 87. Important Words:

النَّار (the Fire) means fire both as a source of light and of heat, the latter aspect being more dominant. Another word derived from the same root is نور meaning light, which is used without reference to the element of heat. The word النار (the Fire) has come to be used about "Hell", the punishment of which will consist of fire (Aqrah). It is significant that whereas the blessings of Heaven have been metaphorically spoken of as "streams of water", the punishment of Hell has been called "fire".

### Commentary:

After recounting some malpractices of the Jews, the Quran proceeds to explain the root cause of their arrogance and hard-heartedness. These evil practices of the Jews, the Quran points out, are due to the wrong notion that they were immune from punishment (Jew. Enc. under Gehenna), or if they will at all be punished, the punishment will be

82. Aye, whoso does evil and is encompassed by his sins—those are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.<sup>88</sup>

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ  
خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ  
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

very slight. It is recorded that at the time of the Holy Prophet, a section of the Jews thought that the punishment of the Jews would not last more than forty days (Jarīr, under 2:81). Others regarded even this as too long, and reduced it to seven days (Jarīr, *ibid*). As for modern Jews, Sale says: "It is a received opinion among the Jews at present, that no person (from among the Jews), be he ever so wicked, or of whatever sect, shall remain in Hell above eleven months or at most a year, except Dathan and Abiram and atheists (from among the Jews) who will be tormented there to all eternity" (Wherry, i. 318).

The concluding portion of the verse, i.e. *have you taken a promise from Allah...?* has been added to point out that the matter of salvation does not rest on the wish of a person or people but only on the grace and mercy of Allah Who has prescribed a law for it. This law the Quran proceeds to explain in the following two verses.

### 88. Important Words:

سَاءَ (evil) is derived from ساء meaning, it or he was or became evil or bad. So سيئة means, anything that is evil or bad. The Arabs say قول سيء i.e. an evil word or an evil opinion (Aqrab).

خطأ (sins) is derived from خطأ

meaning, he committed a mistake or an offence or a sin. The word خطيئة, though translated here as plural, is really singular, meaning, a sinful act or an offence, whether intentional or otherwise (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

### Commentary:

This and the following verse prescribe the law of punishment and reward, or, in other words, of Hell and Heaven. The Quran here begins with the law pertaining to punishment, because in the preceding verse the Jews claimed immunity from punishment. The Jews based their claim on the fact that they were a chosen people of God, being descended from Prophets. The Quran strongly repudiates this idea, saying, that Hell and Heaven have not been earmarked for any race. The entry of man into Hell or Heaven depends on what beliefs he holds and what actions he performs in this world. If a man holds wrong beliefs and performs sinful deeds, he will go to Hell, irrespective of the fact whether he is a Jew or a Christian or anybody else.

In the verse under comment, the word سيئة (evil) read with the context signifies rejection of the Holy Prophet by the Jews, thus referring to the condition as to wrong belief, and the word خطيئة (sin) signifies their

83. But they who believe and do good works,—those are the dwellers of Heaven; therein shall they abide.<sup>89</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ  
أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

general misdeeds, thus referring to the condition as to sinful actions. It must, however, be noted that, as occasional stumbling is generally pardonable with the Merciful God, provided the belief is good and provided further that there is an honest effort on one's part to live righteously, the words, *he is encompassed by his sins*, have been used to point to the fact that only such misdeeds can drive one to Hell as are so large in number as to virtually encompass a man, just as an invading army encompasses a besieged force, leaving it no way out.

Coming as it does after a narration of the wrong beliefs and sinful deeds of the Israelites, the verse warns the Jews that with such a black record they should be ashamed to claim immunity from the punishment of Hellfire.

### 89. Important Words:

خالدون (shall abide) signifies a long time but not necessarily time without end. See note on 2:26.

### Commentary:

This verse sententiously sets forth the Divine law relating to salvation or the entry into Heaven.

Almost all the religions of the world hold salvation as a monopoly for their adherents and condemn others to everlasting Hell. Islam has

raised its powerful voice against such notions, declaring them to be false and baseless. It does not lend the least support to the idea that salvation will come as a free gift to a certain class of men in whose case punishment, if resorted to at all, will only be a nominal one. According to Islam salvation can be attained only by combining true faith with good actions. The condition as to true faith serves as a warning to those people who reject certain Prophets of God and still hope to attain salvation because they belong to a specified class and are descended from certain holy persons. And the condition of good actions serves as a warning to those who are negligent in deeds, thinking that mere enrolment in the category of believers will bring salvation. Islam would have none of them.

The word خالدون (shall abide) signifies a long, long time but not necessarily eternity. As will be noted, the word has been used in verses 82 and 83 both with regard to the inmates of Hell and of Heaven. This should not give rise to the misunderstanding either that both the punishment of Hell and the reward of Heaven are eternal or that both will come to an end after a long time. The Quran makes it clear elsewhere that though both the punishment of Hell and the reward

**R. 10.**

84. And *remember the time* when <sup>a</sup>We took a covenant from the children of Israel: ‘You shall worship *nothing* but Allah and *show* kindness to parents and to kindred and orphans and the poor, and speak to men kindly and <sup>b</sup>observe Prayer, and pay the Zakāh’; then you turned away in aversion, except a few of you.<sup>90</sup>

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ لَا  
تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا  
وَوِذَى الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسْكِينِ  
وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا ۚ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ  
وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۖ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا  
مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:155; 5:13. <sup>b</sup>2:44; 4:78; 6:73; 22:79; 24:57; 30:32.

of Heaven are meant to last long, it is only the reward of Heaven which is everlasting (11:107-109).

**90. Important Words:**

ميثاق (a covenant). See 2:64.

**Commentary:**

After setting forth the attitude of the Israelites of the Holy Prophet's time towards the Prophets of God and their own Scriptures, the Quran draws their attention to the teachings which they had been required to follow but which they ignored.

The verse under comment does not refer to any particular covenant, but to the vices which were rife among the Jews at the time and which were forbidden them in the Bible. Worship of any object other than God is repeatedly forbidden in the Jewish scriptures (Exod. 20:3-6). Again, kindness to parents is also among the injunctions (Exod. 20:12). Similarly, for the kind treatment of kinsmen, clear injunctions have been given

(Lev. 19:17, 18; Exod. 21:9, and Prov. 3:27, 28). For care of orphans, an injunction is to be met with in Deut. 14:29. Sympathy for the poor is enjoined in Deut. 15:11. The injunction to deal gently with mankind is found in Prov. 3:30. The commandment to observe Prayer is given in Deut. 6:13. The injunction for alms-giving may be seen in Exod. 23:10, 11.

The Jews openly disregarded these clear injunctions. They set up equals to God, some believing in Ezra as the son of God, others taking the word of their divines as revelation and setting aside the dictates of the Holy Writ. Their treatment of their own kinsmen and others was cruel. Their attitude towards orphans and the indigent was unsympathetic. They were quite devoid of fellow feeling and were lax in worship and alms-giving. It should, however, be noted that God has not condemned the whole Jewish nation, but has made an exception in the case

85. And *remember the time* when We took a covenant from you: ‘You shall not shed your blood or turn your people out of your homes’; then you confirmed *it*; and you have been witness to *it*.<sup>91</sup>

86. Yet you are the people who slay your own brethren and turn out a section of your people from their homes, backing up one another against them with sin and transgression. And if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, while their very expulsion was unlawful for you. Do you, then, believe in part of the Book and disbelieve in part? There is, therefore, no

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ  
دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ  
دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ  
تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ  
وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ  
دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِثْمِ  
وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِنْ يَأْتِوكُمْ أُسْرَى  
تُفْدُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ  
إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ  
وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ

of the righteous few among them.

In this verse, as everywhere else in the Quran, the sequence of words follows the natural order of importance. The worship of the One God is mentioned first. Then mention is made of mankind, who have been divided into two classes: (1) those who deserve good treatment as a right; (2) those to whom kindness is shown as an act of charity. The first class is mentioned first, because in their case there is a sort of obligation, a debt to be paid. Those who are to be treated kindly out of charity are mentioned afterwards, the degree of need in each case determining the sequence. Last of all, acts of

obedience to God are mentioned; and out of them the most important ones pertaining to the purification of the soul and the payment of religious taxes are selected; and these are placed after fellow feeling, because fellow feeling is the first step towards the moral elevation of man, who often feels impelled to it from within without reference to any law.

It is noteworthy that the injunctions that are found scattered in the Bible have been placed together in a most beautiful order in the Quran.

### 91. Commentary:

See under 2:87.

reward for such among you as do that, except disgrace in the present life; and on the Day of Judgement they shall be driven to a most severe chastisement; and surely Allah is not unmindful of what you do.<sup>92</sup>

87. These are they who have preferred the present life to the Hereafter. Their punishment shall not therefore be lightened, nor shall they be helped *in any other way*.<sup>93</sup>

يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ  
الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ  
الْعَذَابِ ۖ وَمَا لِلَّهِ بِعَافٍ لِّعَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْحَيَاةَ  
الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ ۖ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ  
الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

## 92. Commentary:

See under 2: 87.

## 93. Commentary:

After considering the vices of the Jews in general in the previous verse, the Quran addresses the Jews of Medina in particular in verses 85 and 86. It is pointed out that in face of the clear injunctions to the contrary, the Jews of Medina had been killing one another and turning one another out of their homes. As explained under 2:18, there lived in Medina in the time of the Holy Prophet three Jewish tribes, the Banū Qainuqā', the Banū Naḍir and the Banū Quraizah; and two pagan tribes, the Aus and the Khazraj. Two of the Jewish tribes, Banū Qainuqā' and Banū Quraizah, sided with the Aus, and Banū Naḍir with the Khazraj. Thus, whenever these pagan clans were at war with each other, the Jewish tribes were automatically involved. But, if during

a war any Jews were taken prisoner by the pagans, the former would collect money by subscription and ransom them. They considered it improper for a Jew to remain in bondage with a Gentile. The Quran objects to this course by saying that their faith not only forbids the enslavement of Jews, but also prohibits mutual warfare and murder in which they were openly indulging, and there could be nothing worse than to accept a portion of the Scriptures and reject the rest; for, when one accepts a portion of the Scriptures, it is proof of the fact that one is convinced of their truth. Thus rejection of a portion is clear evidence of a perverted mind. As regards the prohibition of the enslavement of Jews, the reader is referred to Lev. 25:39-43, 47-49, 54, 55; Neh. 5:8; and the Enc. Bib. iv, 4657. In accordance with these injunctions, the Jews of Medina used

**R. 11.**

88. And verily <sup>a</sup>We gave Moses the Book and <sup>b</sup>caused after him Messengers to follow in his footsteps; and to Jesus, son of Mary, <sup>c</sup>We gave manifest Signs, and strengthened him with <sup>d</sup>the Spirit of Holiness. Will you then, every time a Messenger comes to you with what you yourselves desire not, behave arrogantly and treat some as liars and slay others?<sup>94</sup>

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ  
بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ  
الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَإِيَّاهُ بَرُوحُ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا  
جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ  
اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا  
تَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:54. <sup>b</sup>5:47; 57:28. <sup>c</sup>2:254; 3:185; 5:111; 43:64. <sup>d</sup>16:103.

to have Jewish slaves redeemed, but it was absurd on their part to do so, because they themselves created the circum-stances which led to their enslavement.

Verse 87 points to the fact that the Jews who opposed the Holy Prophet had entirely become worldly-minded, forgetting all about the next life. So they deserved no mercy, and there being no extenuating circumstances, their punishment would not be lightened.

**94. Important Words:**

تَقْفَيْنَا (We caused to follow) is derived from قَفَا which means, the back of the neck. Hence قَفَا أَثَرَهُ means, he followed him. قَفَى (qaffā) means, he made a person or thing follow or come after another (Aqrab).

بَيِّنَات (manifest Signs) is derived from بَيَّن meaning, he explained a thing so as to make it clear or manifest. So بَيِّنَات means, such signs

and arguments as make a thing manifest and clearly establish the truth of a claimant (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

روح القدس (Spirit of Holiness) is a compound word made up of روح and القدس. The first-mentioned word, i.e. روح means, a spirit, an angel, a word of God; and قدس means, sanctity, holiness. روح القدس would thus mean, the holy or blessed word of God; the spirit or angel of holiness (Aqrab & Lane). It is generally taken to signify the angel Gabriel.

**Commentary:**

In this verse, the Israelites are told that they had opposed all the Prophets of God, beginning from Moses and ending with Jesus, for no other reason than that some of the teachings of these Prophets were at variance with their cherished desires.

The verse, while speaking generally of the Prophets who came after

Moses, makes a special mention of Jesus. The reason for this lies in the fact that somehow or other, the Jews accepted all those Prophets who appeared prior to Jesus, but they stubbornly refused to accept him. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that particular mention should have been made of Jesus, and it should have been declared that he was as good and as holy a Prophet as so many others who had gone before him and in whom the Jews had believed, inasmuch as he possessed, in common with them, that characteristic Spirit of Holiness which distinguished God's Prophets from other men of the world. The most powerful proof of the truth of the claims of Jesus as a Prophet was his being favoured with Signs and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and this is the very proof on the basis of which the Jews had believed in the previous Prophets. The *بينات* (manifest Signs) and *روح القدس* (the Spirit of Holiness) have been mentioned here not because they were the unique characteristics of Jesus, but because both these evidences, which must accompany every true Prophet, were denied him by the Jews. From Matt. 12:38-40, it is apparent that the Jews denied that Jesus showed any Sign, while from Luke 11:15 and Matt. 10:25 we learn that, according to the Jews, Jesus, far from being favoured with the Holy Spirit, was influenced by the Evil Spirit and was (God forbid!) himself a devil.

That *بينات* (manifest Signs) and *روح القدس* (the Spirit of Holiness) are the

common characteristics of all the Prophets of God and not an exclusive distinction of Jesus is apparent from other verses of the Quran as well. Says the Quran: *That was because their Messengers came to them with بينات (manifest Signs) but they disbelieved; so Allah seized them. Surely, He is strong and severe in chastising* (40:23). Also see 2:100. And elsewhere the Quran says about the Holy Prophet, *Say, the روح القدس (Spirit of Holiness) has brought it (the Quran) down from thy Lord with truth that He may strengthen those who believe and as a guidance and glad tidings for Muslims* (16:103). The Quran goes still further and declares that the Spirit of Holiness descends not only on Prophets but also on true believers (58:23).

In this connection we have also the testimony of the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said to the poet Ḥassān, "Reply, O Ḥassān (to the disbelievers), on behalf of the Prophet of God, and O God, help Thou Ḥassān with روح القدس i.e. the Spirit of Holiness" (Bukhārī & Muslim).

Ḥassān also declares in a couplet of his that روح القدس i.e. the Holy Spirit was always with the Muslims. Says he:

و جبريل رسول الله فينا  
و روح القدس ليس له كفاء

"And Gabriel, the Messenger of God, is among us and the Spirit of Holiness has no match" (Muslim).

From the above it is clear that *البينات* (manifest Signs) and *روح القدس* (the Spirit of Holiness) are not the exclusive privileges of Jesus but were



89. They said, "Our hearts are wrapped in covers.' Nay, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief. Little is that which they believe.<sup>95</sup>

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ  
بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:156; 41:6.

vouchsafed to all the Prophets of God. Even holy men other than Prophets have received the Spirit of Holiness from God. The specific mention of "manifest Signs" and "the Spirit of Holiness" in this verse is thus meant only to bring home to the Jews that the rejection of Jesus was entirely unjustified.

It is commonly believed that روح القدس is another name of the angel Gabriel (Jarīr & Kathīr). As explained under 2:31, out of His infinite wisdom, God has appointed different angels to execute His will and manifest His attributes in the universe; and the angel to whom the work of bringing about purification in the world and of reflecting God's attribute of holiness has been assigned is called, روح القدس. The expression "Holy Spirit" is also met with in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:11). Some commentators have also interpreted روح القدس as a special manifestation of God's اسم اعظم i.e. His chief attribute of Holiness (Kathīr).

### 95. Important Words:

غُلْف (wrapped in covers) is the plural of اغلف which means a thing wrapped in a covering. غلاف means a covering. The word اغلف has also come to mean, one who is uncircumcised, i.e. one whose foreskin, which is also like a

covering, is not removed. On the same basis قلب اغلف has come to mean, a heart which is wrapped in a covering; a heart that does not understand anything (Aqrah). The word also signifies, a heart which is a storehouse (lit. bag) of knowledge (Mufradāt). لعنهم (cursed them). لعنه means: (1) he drove him away and removed him from all good; (2) he humiliated him and expressed an evil opinion about him; (3) he cursed him (Aqrah). اللعن which is the infinitive from لعن gives the sense of driving away a person and putting him at a distance from oneself by way of anger and displeasure. When used by God it means: (1) deprivation of His mercy; and (2) infliction of punishment (Mufradāt). The word is not here used by way of abuse but as expressing an actual state or condition.

### Commentary:

The clause, قلوبنا غلف can be interpreted here in all the different senses given above. Whenever the Jews found themselves unable to refute Quranic arguments, they ironically said that they were men of poor intelligence and unable to comprehend Islamic doctrines, and that Muslims should, therefore, go to their learned men and explain their tenets to them. Or taking the

90. And when there came to them a Book from Allah, "fulfilling that which is with them,—and before that they had prayed for victory over the disbelievers—yet when there came to them <sup>b</sup>that which they knew, they rejected it. The curse of Allah be on the disbelievers.<sup>96</sup>

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ  
مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ۖ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ  
يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ فَلَمَّا  
جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ ۖ فَلَعْنَةُ  
اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:42, 92, 98, 102; 3:82; 4:48; 35:32; 46:13. <sup>b</sup>2:147.

word غلف to mean "enclosed in coverings" this reply of the Jews would mean that their hearts enjoyed special protection from their Lord so that they could not be influenced by the preachings of Muslims. Again, taking the word to signify "a storehouse of knowledge", the reply of the Jews would mean that, as they possessed all necessary spiritual knowledge, they did not stand in need of further teaching.

Whatever was the motive of the Jews in saying these words, the Quran says that Islamic doctrines were not only consistent with reason and easy to grasp, but superior to all other teachings, and the reply of the Jews only indicated that they had lost all touch with God and their faith had become corrupt and vitiated.

The clause, *Allah has cursed them for their disbelief*, is intended to point to the truth that Allah's curse comes only as a result of some evil act on man's own part. Allah, being most Merciful, never deprives a man of His mercy, unless and until he shuts upon himself the doors of divine mercy.

The words, *little is that which they believe*, point to yet another great principle. Though the Jews have been declared to be "accursed" in the sight of God and have been adjudged as "disbelievers", yet God does not say that they are altogether deprived of faith. Their faith is indeed imperfect; nay, it is positively evil, containing much more of falsehood than of truth, yet the little faith that they still happen to possess has been expressly acknowledged by God. Compare with this the claim of the Jews themselves when they say, the Christians stand on nothing (2:114). The God of Islam would not say that of either the Jews or the Christians.

## 96. Important Words:

يستفتحون (they prayed for victory) is derived from فتح meaning (1) he opened a thing, or he disclosed a thing; (2) he conquered or gained victory over. The word يستفتحون would, therefore, have two meanings:

(1) they disclose; and (2) they ask or pray for victory (Aqrah).

91. Evil is that for which they have sold their souls: that they should disbelieve in what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah should send down His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases. So <sup>a</sup>they incurred wrath upon wrath; and there is an humiliating chastisement for the disbelievers.<sup>97</sup>

بِسْمَا شَتَرُوا بِهٖ اَنْفُسَهُمْ اَنْ يَّكْفُرُوْا  
بِمَا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بَعِيًّا اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ  
فَضْلِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖۚ فَبَآءُ  
بِعَصْبٍ عَلٰى غَضَبٍۭ وَلِلْكَافِرِيْنَ  
عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩١﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:113; 5:61.

### Commentary:

According to the first meaning of يستفتحون the verse would signify that Jews used to disclose to the pagan Arabs the fact that there was foretold in their Scriptures the appearance of a Prophet who would spread the truth all over the world. But when that Prophet actually appeared, even those of them who had seen the signs of God fulfilled in his person turned away from him.

Taking the second meaning of the word, the verse would signify that before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the Jews used to pray fervently to God to raise a Prophet who would cause the true faith to triumph over the false ones (Hishām, i. 150). But when the Prophet for whom they prayed actually came and the ascendancy of truth over falsehood became manifest, they refused to accept him. This naturally brought on their heads the curse of God.

It may be repeated here that the word "curse" is not used in the Quran as abuse but as indicative of the actual

state or condition of a person or a people. As explained under the preceding verse, the literal meaning of the word لعنة is "to be driven away from God" and hence all who stand in opposition to God and His Prophets incur لعنة and are spoken of as being under the curse of God; i.e. driven away from God's presence and deprived of His mercy.

### 97. Important Words:

بغى (grudging) is derived from بغى. They say بغى الشيء i.e. he wished or desired or sought the thing. بغى الرجل means, the man transgressed or turned away from the truth, or he disobeyed or revolted against a lawful authority. بغى عليه means, he wronged him and continued long in the act (Aqrab). بغى على اخيه means, he envied his brother; he wished that a blessing might become transferred from his brother to himself (Lane). In the text the word has been translated as "grudging" which is the same as "envying".

باء (they incurred) is derived from باء. باء به means, which means, he returned.

92. And <sup>a</sup>when it is said to them, 'Believe in what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us'; and they disbelieve in what *has been sent down* after that, yet it is the Truth, fulfilling that which is with them. Say: <sup>b</sup>'Why, then, did you attempt to slay the Prophets of Allah before this, if you were believers?'<sup>98</sup>

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا  
نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا  
وَرَاءَهُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ ۚ  
قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:171. <sup>b</sup>3:113, 182.

he returned with it. *بَاءً بَغْضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ* means, he returned with anger from God, i.e. the anger of God came upon him; he incurred His anger (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

In this verse, we are told that the Jews rejected the Holy Prophet solely because he was of different nationality. The verse means that the Jews upon whom the truth has dawned and who have come to recognize the Quran as the very Book mentioned in their Scriptures are, out of sheer pride and obstinacy, impiously rejecting it, little knowing that, by so doing, they are hastening the ruin of their own souls. The truth is that they cannot bear to see a Prophet raised from among any people other than their own. They fail to realize that all alike are the creatures of God and there is no earthly reason why Prophets should appear only from among the Israelites.

The words *بَاءً بَغْضَبٍ* translated here

as, *they incurred wrath*, literally mean "they returned with (God's) wrath" which points to the fact that though God called them to His presence in order to bestow on them His favours, they, instead of receiving favours, returned from His presence loaded with His displeasure and anger.

The words, *wrath upon wrath*, are used to signify that even before the coming of the Holy Prophet the Jews had incurred the anger of God by their rejection of Jesus and other iniquities; so when they rejected the Holy Prophet, they incurred wrath upon wrath, i.e. they added to their previous load of God's anger.

### 98. Commentary:

The verse means that whenever Islam is presented to Jews, they, far from reflecting over its claims, consider it enough to say that they will believe in what is sent to Israelite Prophets only, and not in the revelation of outsiders, although the

93. And Moses came to you with manifest Signs, then <sup>a</sup>you took the calf *for worship* in his absence and you were transgressors.<sup>99</sup>

94. And *remember the time* <sup>b</sup>when We took a covenant from you and raised high above you the Mount, *saying*, 'Hold firmly to what We have given you and hearken'; they said: 'We hear and we disobey'; and their hearts were permeated with *the love* of the calf because of their disbelief. Say, 'Evil is that which your faith enjoins on you, if you have any faith!'<sup>100</sup>

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ  
اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ  
ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ  
الطُّورَ ۖ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ  
وَأَسْمِعُوا ۚ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا ۚ  
وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ۚ  
قُلْ بِسْمَايَا مُّرْكَبِكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:52; 4:154; 7:149, 153; 20:98. <sup>b</sup>2:64; 4:155; 7:172.

revelation they reject on such flimsy grounds fulfils the prophecies contained in their own Scriptures about a new Book. Further, it is added that the statement that they would adhere to what was revealed to Israelite Prophets is absurd, seeing that they had opposed even their own Prophets in their time.

This verse also makes it clear what the word مصدقا means when followed by the preposition لام. The expression has been used as a proof of the truth of the Quran, and it is therefore clear that it conveys the sense of "fulfilling" and not that of "confirming". It is only the fulfilment of prophecies in the Bible that can serve as evidence of the truth of the Quran. In this connection, see also 2:42.

For the prophecies alluded to in this verse, i.e. the prophecies contained in the Bible about the Quran and the Holy Prophet, the reader is referred to Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:19-24; Deut. 33:2; Matt. 21:42-44; Isa. 21:13-17; 28:9-13; chap. 42; 62:2-4; Dan. 7; etc.

For a discussion of the words, *why did you attempt to slay the Prophets*, see under 2:62.

### 99. Commentary:

See note on 2: 55.

### 100. Important Words:

اشربوا (were permeated with) is derived from شرب meaning, he drank. اشرب means, he was made to drink. The expression, اشرب في قلبه حب فلان means,

95. Say, <sup>a</sup>“If the abode of the Hereafter, with Allah, is solely for you to the exclusion of *all* other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful.”<sup>101</sup>

96. But <sup>b</sup>never shall they wish for it, because of what their own hands have sent on before *them*; and Allah knows the wrong-doers well.<sup>102</sup>

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

وَلَنْ يَّتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ط  
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:112; 62:7. <sup>b</sup>62:8.

the love of such and such a person permeated his heart (Aqrab). The word is so used because love is like alcohol that intoxicates one who partakes of it. The clause, اشربوا في قلوبهم (lit. they were made to drink into their hearts the calf) must really be read as اشربوا في قلوبهم حب العجل (lit. they were made to drink into their hearts the love of the calf), the word حب (love) being understood before the word عجل (calf).

### Commentary:

For an explanation of the expression, *raised high above you the Mount*, see under 2:64.

The words, *they said, We hear and we disobey*, signify that they practically refused to obey God. They did not necessarily use these exact words; for the word, as pointed out under 2:31, sometimes conveys the sense not of actual speech but of practical conduct.

Reference to calf-worship in verse 93 is not a mere reiteration of what has been already said in verse 55; the incident has been mentioned here as an illustration of what has been said

about the Jews in the previous verse. Their attention is drawn to their conduct in the days of Moses. When Moses was absent from them for a short time only, they took the image of a calf for their idol, although they had witnessed how God had helped Moses and had shown mighty Signs at his hands; and that at a time when they had given a solemn promise not to worship anything besides God. In spite of that promise, they showed active opposition to the commandments of God by their deeds.

In the concluding portion of the verse, it is pointed out that the Jews professed to believe in what was revealed to them by God, but their belief was of a strange character for in spite of it, they persisted in their opposition to the Prophets. If this was believing, then their faith was only leading them astray.

### 101. Commentary:

See under 2:96 below.

### 102. Commentary:

In verses 95 and 96 Jews are invited

97. And thou shalt surely find them, of all people, the most covetous of life, even more than those who set up equals with God. Every one of them wishes that he may be granted a life of a thousand years, but his being granted *such* life <sup>a</sup>shall not keep him away from the punishment; and Allah sees all that they do.<sup>103</sup>

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَوٰةٍ ۖ  
وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ  
يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ۚ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحَّزِهٍ  
مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ إِنَّ يُعَمَّرُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌۢ بِمَا  
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

### R. 12.

98. Say, ‘Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he it is who <sup>b</sup>has caused it to descend on thy heart by the command of Allah, which <sup>c</sup>fulfils that which precedes

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلْجَبْرِئِلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ  
عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ  
يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>62:9. <sup>b</sup>26:194, 195. <sup>c</sup>See 2:90.

to join with Muslims in what is termed a *مباهلة* or prayer contest. They are called upon to pray to God in the company of Muslims for the death or destruction of the party with which God is displeased on account of its espousal of the cause of falsehood. If Jews are really the favourites of God and Muslims are under His wrath, the latter, as a result of the prayer contest, will surely meet with ruin, and thus it will become clear which of the two parties is on the side of truth. The only evidence which in this world can prove the truth of any of the conflicting claims regarding the next life made by the different religious systems is that the promises held out about the next life should in part at least begin to fulfil themselves in this

very life. If, in such a prayer contest as the above, God were to show His favour to the Jews, it would furnish a clear proof that His favours would accompany them also in the next life.

The Quran adds that Jews will never venture to accept the challenge, for they are well aware of their actions and the motives that guide them.

For a fuller description of the institution of *Mubāhalah* or prayer contest see under 3:62.

### 103. Commentary:

The reason why Jews were more attached to the world than pagans is that the latter did not believe in any retribution after death and, therefore, though they loved this world as the

it, and is a guidance and glad tidings to the believers—104

only place for enjoying honour and happiness and entertained no hope about the next, yet with no fear of punishment after death, they were less cringingly attached to the present life than the Jews, who believed in Resurrection after death and feared in their hearts that their actions would make them liable to punishment before God.

#### 104. Important Words:

جبريل (Gabriel) is a compound word made up of جبر (גבר) which in Hebrew means a man or a mighty man or a hero, and ايل (איל) which means God (Hebrew-English Lexicon by William Gesenius, Boston, 1836. Also see Bukhārī, chap. on *Tafsīr*). The latter word occurs in many combinations (e.g. in the word Ishmael in Gen. 16:11 which means "God heareth" or "God has heard"). In Arabic, which is the mother of Hebrew, the word جبر means, mending a broken thing; giving a poor man so liberally as to make him well off; a brave man. The word ايل is either derived from the Arabic word الله (God) or from the root آل, the active participle from which is آئل meaning Controller or Ruler, i.e. God (Aqrab). Ibn 'Abbās relates that the other name of جبريل is عبد الله i.e. the servant of God (Jarīr), which is simply another rendering of the word جبريل. Thus the angel جبريل (Gabriel) is so called because he is the servant of God; he is the strong and brave servant of God; he looks after the repairing or reformation of the universe, he bestows God's bounties

on mankind and is a liberal giver.

In Islam جبريل has been described as the chief among the angels (Manthūr) and was therefore selected by God to be the bearer of the Quranic message, the best and the last شريعة (Law) to descend from Heaven. Many commentators consider that جبريل (Gabriel) is synonymous with روح القدس (the Spirit of Holiness) spoken of in the Quran and the Ḥadīth. Similarly, Gabriel has been spoken of as روح الامين (the Trusty Spirit) in the Quran (26:194).

#### Commentary:

The Jews had been invited to believe in the Quran, but they refused to accept it (v. 92 above) on the ground that it was said to have been brought by Gabriel while, according to them, the bearer of Divine Revelation was Michael, and not Gabriel (Musnad). The function of Gabriel, as we learn from the Bible, is to convey the messages of God to His servants (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; and Luke 1:19, 26. It is strange that Gabriel is mentioned in the Old Testament for the first time in Daniel and not earlier). The Quran, as the verse under comment points out, assigns the same function to Gabriel. But in some later writings of the Jews, he is described as "the angel of fire and thunder" (Enc. Bib. under Gabriel).

Such was the idea of the Jews in the days of the Holy Prophet. They looked upon Gabriel as an angel of wars, calamities and hardships (Jarīr under 2:98). Muslim historians tell us



99. "Whoever is an enemy to Allah, and His angels, and His Messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael, then, surely, Allah is an enemy to *such* disbelievers.'<sup>105</sup>

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ  
وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَلَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ  
لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>58:6.

that this idea had such a firm hold on the minds of the Jews that when they were told that the bearer of the Quranic revelation was Gabriel, they said: جبريل ذلك الذي ينزل بالحرب والقتال والعذاب - i.e. "Gabriel is the angel who is associated with war and bloodshed and punishment. He is our enemy." By saying this, they meant that they would not believe in a revelation brought by Gabriel (Musnad). The reason why the Jews bore enmity to Gabriel seems to be that they had fallen on evil days and as, according to them, Gabriel was the angel of war and punishment, therefore they ascribed their misfortunes to him. There is no doubt that the Talmudic traditions and the Targums were the origin of this notion which gained such a firm footing among Jews; otherwise originally the Bible declares Gabriel to be the angel of good tidings and of the Divine Word. It is evident that with the lapse of time legends and myths grew round the original truth, which was subsequently lost; and the Jews clung fast to their erroneous belief, which stood in the way of their accepting the Quran or, for that matter, any revelation coming through the agency of Gabriel.

The Quran has, in the verse under comment, brought forward four

arguments in refutation of the Jewish plea for rejecting the Quran: *Firstly*, that no angel can bring down any revelation unless he receives direct command from God. Hence the angel who brings the revelation, whether he is Gabriel or Michael or any other, is only a vehicle for the Divine Word; and even if Jewish tradition associates an angel with calamities, it cannot call into question the authority from which his message originates. *Secondly*, that the revelation sent down to the Prophet of Islam is مصدق (in fulfilment) of the previous Books and in it all the prophecies about the promised Lawgiver contained in the earlier Scriptures find their fulfilment, which is a clear proof of its Divine origin. *Thirdly*, that when it is practically established that the teachings of the Quran are a guidance for mankind, its acceptance becomes binding upon all right thinking men. *Fourthly*, that the Quran contains teachings which, besides being right, are also بشرى (bearers of glad tidings) to its followers and harbingers of God's mercy and favours. Such revelation should not be rejected simply for the reason that it has been brought down by Gabriel.

### 105. Important Words:

ميكال (Michael) is the name of

100. And surely We have sent down to thee manifest Signs, and no one disbelieves in them but the disobedient.<sup>106</sup>

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ ۚ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

another angel who, like Gabriel, is also one of the chief angels. The word has been described, as being a combination of words, i.e. كَائِيل or كَائِل which means, who as God? or who is like God? (Geseneus & Jew. Enc.); i.e. there is none like God, the angel Michael having been given this name owing to his being assigned the duty of establishing God's Unity and Oneness in the universe. The Jews looked upon Michael as their favourite angel (Jew. Enc., also Jarīr, under verse 2:98, 99). He was the guardian angel of the Israelites (Enc. Brit. under Michael). In Islam Gabriel is believed to be superior to Michael in rank, for whereas Gabriel is known as عبد الله Michael has been given the name عبید الله, the word عبید being diminutive of the word عبد (Jarīr, i. 329). In the days of the Holy Prophet, the Jews looked upon Gabriel as the angel of wars, calamities and hardships, whereas they looked upon Michael as the angel of peace and plenty and rain and herbage (Jarīr & Kathīr).

### Commentary:

As an insult to a king's agent implies insult to the king himself, so those who say unworthy things about any of the angels really find fault with God. The Quran, therefore, declares that the words of the Jews referred to in the preceding verse imply irreverence to God and

opposition to His will, such as only an enemy of God could show. Angels constitute an important link in the spiritual chain and he who breaks even one link of the spiritual chain or manifests ill-will against any single unit of the spiritual system, in fact severs his connection with the whole system. Such a man deprives himself of the favours and blessings which are bestowed upon the true servants of God and renders himself deserving of the punishment fixed for transgressors.

In this verse a general mention of God, the angels and the Prophets is followed by a specific mention of Gabriel and Michael. The reason is not far to seek. The Jews regarded Gabriel as their enemy. It is therefore particularly pointed out that enmity with Gabriel merits divine punishment. The name of Michael is also mentioned along with Gabriel's so that no Muslim might take it into his head to retort to Jewish hatred of Gabriel by speaking ill of Michael, the favourite angel of the Jews.

### 106. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that the denial of the Holy Prophet by the Jews, and for that matter by all other disbelievers, is quite unreasonable because his claim is based on convincing arguments and manifest Signs. The verse gives the lie to those who have the effrontery to assert that,

101. What! <sup>a</sup>every time they make a covenant, will a party among them throw it aside? Nay, most of them have no faith.<sup>107</sup>

102. And *now* when there has come to them a Messenger from Allah, <sup>b</sup>fulfilling that which is with them, a party of the people to whom the Book was given <sup>c</sup>have thrown the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they know *it* not.<sup>108</sup>

أَوْ كُلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا نَبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ  
مِّنْهُمْ ۖ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ  
مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ بَدَّ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ  
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ ۖ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ وَرَاءَ  
ظُهُورِهِمْ كَاتِبُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:188. <sup>b</sup>See 2:90. <sup>c</sup>3:188.

according to the Quran, the Prophet of Islam showed no Signs. The greatest of the Signs shown by the Holy Prophet is the matchlessness of the Quran itself.

The word **الفاسقون** (the disobedient) occurring at the end of this verse means "those who first take upon themselves to observe what the Law orders and acknowledge its authority and then go against it" (Lane). This is a true picture of the Jews who rejected the Holy Prophet in spite of the fact that his coming had been foretold in their own Scriptures.

### 107. Commentary:

See under next verse.

### 108. Commentary:

As pointed out in the preceding verse, the Jews had pledged themselves to their own Prophets that they would accept the Prophet who was to appear from among their

brethren, the Ishmaelites, in fulfilment of the prophecies mentioned in the Bible. But although all the signs mentioned in the prophecies concerning the promised Prophet had been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet, yet they persisted in their denial and thus broke their promise and belied their own Scriptures.

The word **مصدق** has been construed to mean: (1) that the Quran declares the Bible to be true, and (2) that the Quran fulfils the prophecies contained in the Bible. The latter meaning only is applicable here. For here the People of the Book are spoken of as casting the Book of God (the Torah) behind their backs as a result of the fulfilment of its prophecies in the Quran. This cannot be the case, if we follow the first meaning ascribed to the word; for if the Quran declared the Bible to be

103. And they pursue *the course* which the rebellious *men* followed during the reign of Solomon. And Solomon did not disbelieve; but it was the rebellious ones who disbelieved, teaching people falsehood and deception. And *they pursue* what was revealed to the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt. But these two taught no one until they had said: 'We are but a trial, do not therefore disbelieve.' So men learnt from them that by which they made a difference between man and his wife, but they harmed no one thereby, except by the command of Allah; on the contrary, these people are learning that which would harm them and do them no good. And they have certainly known that he who trafficks therein has no share *of good* in the Hereafter; and surely evil is that for which they have sold their souls; had they but known!<sup>109</sup>

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيْطَانُ عَلَى مُلْكٍ  
سُلَيْمٍ ۚ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمٌ وَلَكِنَّ  
الشَّيْطَانِ كَفَرُوا يَعْلَمُونَ النَّاسَ  
السَّحَرَهُ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكِينَ بَابِلَ  
هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يَعْلَمَانِ مِنْ  
أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا  
تَكْفُرْ ۖ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ  
بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ ۖ وَمَا هُمْ  
بِضَارِينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۖ  
وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۖ  
وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي  
الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ ۚ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ  
أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۖ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

true, this could not be the cause of the Jews casting their own Book behind their backs. Evidently, the correct meaning is that in spite of the fact that the Quran fulfils the prophecies contained in the Bible, the Jews reject it, and thereby cast their own Book

behind their backs.

### 109. Important Words:

اتلوا (followed). See 2:114

شياطين (rebellious men). See 2:15.

على (during) gives the sense of في i.e. "in" or "during" (Aqrab & Mughnī).

It is also used to denote a hostile sense meaning "against", as one says *خرج عليه* i.e. he rebelled against him, or he went out against him with an army intending to fight (Wright). In this sense the phrase *على ملك سليمان* would mean, against the government of Solomon, or conspiring against his government.

*سحر* (falsehood and deception). In verbal senses *سحره* means, he deceived him; he coaxed him and involved him in trouble and deprived him of his understanding; he enchanted him. *سحر الفضة* means, he coated a piece of silver so as to make it look like gold. The noun *سحر* means, anything the source of which is not quite visible; showing off falsehood in the form of truth; a crafty device; craftiness; mischief; enchantment (Aqrab). It also means, producing what is false in the form of truth; any event of which the cause is hidden and which is imagined to be different from what it really is; embellishment by falsification and deceit (Lane). Thus every falsehood, deceit or crafty device which is meant to hide the real object from public view is included in the meaning of *سحر*.

*ملكين* (two angels) is the dual number from *ملك* (angel) for which see 2:31. Figuratively *ملك* is sometimes used to denote a handsome or holy person, as the Quran says, *He (Joseph) is but a gracious angel*, i.e. a handsome and pious youth (12:32). As in the verse under comment, the two angels are described as teaching something to the people, therefore the word cannot

be taken in its literal significance, because angels do not live among men and do not generally have free intercourse with them (17:95, 96; 21:8). Thus in the present verse *ملكين* would not mean "two angels" in the literal sense of the word but "two holy men".

*هاهروت* (Hārūt) and *ماهروت* (Mārūt) are both descriptive names. *هاهروت* is derived from *هوت* which means, he tore up (Aqrab); hence *هاهروت* means, one who tears; the tearer. *ماهروت* is derived from *مرت* which means, he broke (Aqrab & Lane). Thus *ماهروت* means, one who breaks; the breaker. These names signify that the object of the appearance of these holy men was to 'tear' asunder and 'break' the glory and power of certain people.

*فتنة* (trial) means, the trial or means whereby the condition of a man may be demonstrated in respect of good or evil (Lane). They say *فتن الصائغ الذهب* i.e. the goldsmith melted the gold in the crucible so that its purity or impurity might be ascertained (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

Many a legend unwarranted by the Quran and the Ḥadīth—and even running contrary to them—clusters round this verse. It would be quite unreasonable to interpret it on the basis of those myths. For their true interpretation no external evidence is needed, the words being self-explanatory. It is clear from the verse itself that Jews in the time of the Holy Prophet were bent upon the same mischief which characterized them in the days of Solomon and

during the days of their captivity in Babylon. The verse further indicates that the mischief-mongers of Solomon's time were those "rebellious men" who called him an unbeliever. God says that those wicked men themselves, and not Solomon, lacked belief. Again, the verse tells us that these men taught their associates such signs as conveyed to them meanings quite different from those generally accepted, for the purpose of deceiving other people and concealing their own activities. All this leads to the conclusion that this verse alludes to those secret plots which the enemies of Solomon made against him, and by which they wished to break his empire. It is pointed out that now, in the time of the Holy Prophet, these people are resorting to the selfsame tactics, but that they will fail.

As the verse refers to a number of historical events, it is advisable to relate them here at some length.

When Jews saw that the power of Islam was steadily expanding and that no opposition from the Arabs had been able to arrest the progress of Muslims, they began to excite outsiders against them. At that time there were two large empires in the neighbourhood of Arabia: (1) The Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire; and (2) The Persian Empire. As Jews were already at enmity with the Roman Government, because they were in constant trouble under it, so it was only the Persian Government to which they could look for support.

Harassed by the oppression of Christian rulers, they had taken refuge in Persia, where they enjoyed a good deal of religious freedom, and their religious centre shifted from Judah and Jerusalem to Babylonia (Hutchinson's History of the Nations, p.550). In the seventh century of the Christian era, i.e., during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Jews suffered exceptionally cruel persecution at the hands of the Christian Emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire. "Both Phocas and Heraclius", says the Historians' History of the World (vol. 7, p. 175), "attempted to exterminate the Jewish religion, and if possible to put an end to their national existence. Heraclius not only practised every species of cruelty himself to effect this object within the bounds of his own dominions, but he even made the forced conversion or banishment of the Jews a prominent feature in his diplomacy." So, in the time of the Holy Prophet the only government to which the Jews could look for help was that of Persia, where their co-religionists enjoyed much influence, especially in the reign of Chosroes II (Jew. Enc., ix. 648).

Consequently, when the Jews saw that their efforts to check the progress of Islam had totally failed, they took to exciting the Persian Court against the Holy Prophet by various means; and as a result, Chosroes II issued orders to the Governor of Yemen to send to him the Arabian claimant as a captive. But when the envoys of the Governor came to the Holy Prophet, he asked them to see him the next

day, when he told them that God had informed him that He had their king murdered. Thereupon they returned and related this incident to the Governor. A few days later, the Governor received a letter from Siroes, the son of Chosroes II, to the effect that he had killed his father on account of the latter's tyranny and that the Governor should, on his behalf, renew the oath of allegiance from all the Chiefs of Yemen; and that the order of his father regarding an Arab should be considered as cancelled (Ṭabarī, iii. 1573-1574).

Some historians, including Ṭabarī himself, hold that it was the letter of the Holy Prophet to the king of Persia inviting him to Islam that was the occasion of his orders for the apprehension of the Holy Prophet. But on comparison of the dates of the above-mentioned events, this turns out to be a mistaken view. For, as we read in Zurqānī (ii. 211-212), the letter in question was despatched from Medina on the first of Muḥarram, 7 A.H.—a date corresponding to 12th April, 628 A.D. (Lane under هجرة); whereas Chosroes II, who sent orders for the arrest of the Holy Prophet, had been assassinated on the 29th of February, 628 A.D. (Historians' History of the World, viii. 95). Thus the view that the letter of the Holy Prophet was the cause of Chosroes' orders is quite untenable; and the only possible cause of Chosroes' ignominious orders was that his ears had been poisoned by malicious reports, a fact admitted by Sir William Muir (The Life of Mahomet, p. 370). It is to these efforts of the Jews that the Quran

alludes in the verse under comment.

The verse also points out that it was foolish on the part of the Jews to suppose that they would succeed in that way. Their attention is invited to the fact that they had already been responsible for two secret plots. The first was against Solomon, when some members of their community turned rebels, hatched plots and stirred up bitter feeling against him by calling him an infidel; whereas the infidels were those who opposed him, hurled imputations at him, and set up against him secret societies in which secret signs and symbols were taught. The Jews, however, themselves reaped the ill-reward of their sinister schemes: their power, as a consequence, fell into decay, and at last they became so powerless that they were driven into exile towards Babylon. This account of Jewish secret societies and conspiracies and treacherous signs and symbols, as alluded to in this verse, finds corroboration in the Bible (1 Kings 11:1-6), where we read that the charge of idol-worship was spread against Solomon. An account of his enemies is found in I Kings 11:14, 23, 26, and a reference to secret plots is met with in II Chron. 10: 2-4 where we learn that the Jews had sent for Jeroboam, a bitter enemy of Solomon, immediately after his death and had attempted to make Solomon's son agree to some demands of theirs, involving certain imputations against Solomon, before his accession to the throne. We learn about the secret signs from I Kings 11:29-32, in which the ten tribes of

the Israelites are likened to ten pieces of a garment, and Jeroboam is told that these ten tribes were on his side against Solomon; and so it proved to be, for on the death of Solomon, these ten tribes made Jeroboam their king (I Kings 12:20). Again, the reference of the Quran to the infidelity of Solomon's enemies finds corroboration in II Chron. 11:15, from which we learn that his enemies, who falsely charged him with unbelief, themselves fell into idol-worship when they rose to power.

Besides the testimony of the Bible, there is other evidence to show that in the days of Solomon a secret society was at work against him. An old tradition, current among medieval Freemasons, indicates that Solomon was envious of the superior intelligence of Hiram, the chief architect who built the Temple at Jerusalem. He is said to have attempted to kill the great Mason by having him thrown into a tank of molten brass, but he was saved by the spirit of his ancestor, Cain, who prophesied that at last his people would get the better of their enemy. Solomon, however, as the tradition goes, had him afterwards put to death. It is said of him that he had fixed certain secret signs which were a sort of mystery known only to him and his associates (Secret Societies of the World, Volume II, pp. 1-8; as the original book could not be obtained, the reference is to an Urdu translation). We further learn from this book that before the period of the Accepted Masons, the same signs used in all the Lodges were current

among the Masons of Solomon's time (p. 11) and that at the time of initiation, the Hiram incident was related to the new member (pp. 29, 30). However incredible the story as a whole may be, it points at least to the conclusion that in one way or other, secret societies were associated with Solomon's reign and were much in vogue in his time.

The second occasion when, according to the Quran, the Israelites had resort to secret societies was during their captivity in Babylon. But this time they were not acting against any Prophet but were, on the other hand, working under the leadership of two inspired personages, who were, in obedience to divine command, trying to bring about the deliverance of the Israelites. Their mission was to "tear asunder" and "break down" the empire of the enemies of the Israelites. These holy men told new members, at the time of initiation, that they were a sort of trial from God, serving to differentiate between the good and the bad, and that the Israelites should not therefore refuse to believe what they said, because this would lead them to infidelity. In their teachings they drew a distinction between males and females, confining membership to males only (this is an old practice found among most secret societies). It is also stated that the disciples of these holy men directed their activities against only those for whose chastisement they were commissioned by God.

In this narration, the Quran refers to the days when King Nebuchadnezzar brought the Jews as captives into



104. And <sup>a</sup>if they had believed and acted righteously, better surely would have been the reward from Allah, had they but known!<sup>110</sup>

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقُوا لَمَكُنْ لَهُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:180; 5:66, 67.

Babylon and kept them there for a long time. The holy men referred to in the verse under comment were Haggai, the Prophet, and Zechariah, the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1). When Cyrus, King of Media and Persia, rose to power, the Israelites entered into a secret agreement with him and greatly facilitated his conquest of Babylon. In return for this service, he not only allowed them to return to their own country but also helped in the rebuilding of the Temple (Historians' History of the World, ii. 126).

After stating that the Jews of the Holy Prophet's time were following the same course which was adopted by the rebels of Solomon's days and which was later adopted by the Jews under two holy men in Babylon, it was necessary here to state the ultimate upshot of their efforts against the Holy Prophet, because on the two previous occasion's their efforts had met with different results. On the first occasion the conspiracy of the Israelites, being directed against a Prophet of God, had ended in the total loss of their prestige and finally in their banishment to Babylon. On the second occasion, they took a similar course under two inspired personages and were successful. Hence, in order to indicate whether the efforts of the Jews

against the Holy Prophet would meet with failure, as they did in the days of Solomon, or with success as in Babylon, the Quran says: *these people are learning that which would harm them and do them no good*; hinting that they will not be successful as in Babylon. Accordingly, the consequence of their hostile efforts against the Holy Prophet was that Chosroes, their only supporter, met his death at the hands of his son, and they themselves were exiled from Arabia in the time of 'Umar. In the concluding portion of the verse, God adds: *And they have certainly known that he who trafficks therein has no share of good in the Hereafter*, meaning that a mischievous plotter never succeeds ultimately. The last clause, *had they but known*, throws a flood of light on how intensely God desires that His creatures should always take the right course and not be misled by mischievous people.

### 110. Important Words:

مَثُوبَةٌ (reward) is, like ثَوَابٌ (with which it is synonymous), derived from ثَابَ which means, he returned, or he returned to a good condition. مَثُوبَةٌ and ثَوَابٌ mean, requital or reward of good or bad deeds. Generally, they are used in the sense of a reward of

**R. 13.**

105. O ye who believe, <sup>a</sup>say not 'Rā'inā,' but say, 'Unẓurnā' and hearken. And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment.<sup>111</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا  
وَقُولُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ  
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:47.

good deeds (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

If the Jews had possessed true faith in God and had acted in His fear, they would not have devoted all their energies to the acquisition of worldly gains but would have sought the good of the Hereafter. They have, however, been seeking the advantage of the present life only and have neglected the Hereafter altogether, which shows that they are utterly lacking in true faith and are not leading righteous lives.

**111. Important Words:**

راعى (*rā'inā*) is derived from رعى meaning, he watched or looked on. راعه means, he looks towards him with goodly feeling or he had regard for him. راع امره means, he watched his affair. راعنى سمعك means, lend me your ear or listen to what I say. راع النجوم means, he watched the stars and waited for their setting (Aqrab). So راعنا would mean, look to us or have a regard for us. Or the word is derived from the root رعن i.e. he acted foolishly in which case راعن would mean, a fool; a conceited person; a proud man (Aqrab).

انظرنا (*unẓurnā*) is derived from نظر meaning, he looked, or he saw, or he had regard for. So انظرنا would mean, look to us or have regard for us. Both

these words, i.e. راعنا and انظرنا are used by a listener when he cannot follow the speech of a speaker. They roughly give the sense of, "I request you to repeat what you have said" or, to give a commoner idiom, "I beg your pardon"; or they are used on similar other occasions when one desires to draw the attention of a person towards oneself.

**Commentary:**

After mentioning the intrigues which the Jews carried on with outsiders to ruin the mission of the Holy Prophet, the Quran proceeds to illustrate such of their machinations as they resorted to in order to belittle the Holy Prophet and sow dissension and discord among Muslims. An apparently minor illustration is selected to emphasize the fact that where the spirit of a people is concerned, sometimes very small things bring about dangerous results, inasmuch as they help to undermine the spirit of discipline and respect for authority. It is hinted that the Jews were in the habit of devising plans to detract from the due respect with which the minds of the Muslims were inspired towards the Holy Prophet. One of these mean attempts was to address such words to the Holy Prophet as were not quite in harmony

106. They who disbelieve from among the People of the Book, or from among those who associate gods with Allah, desire not that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; but "Allah chooses for His mercy whomsoever He pleases; and Allah is of exceeding bounty."<sup>112</sup>

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ  
وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ  
خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ  
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٠٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:75.

with a spirit of discipline and respect; or bore a twofold sense, one good and the other bad. Some Muslims, in innocent imitation of the Jews and in ignorance of the latter's real motive, sometimes began to imitate their language.

One of the words used by the Jews was راعنا (*rā'inā*) which, as explained under Important Words, means, have regard for us. But as the word راعنا belongs to the measure of مفاعلة which generally gives the idea of reciprocity denoting two parties standing almost on the same level, it may mean, have regard for us that we may have regard for you. As this expression involved disrespect to the Holy Prophet, God forbids Muslims to use such words, and advises them to use language which is perfectly respectful and unequivocal. He exhorts them to say انظرونا instead of راعنا because the former expression, though having a similar meaning, conveys no bad sense. God further enjoins Muslims to listen to the Holy Prophet attentively, so that they may not need such words at all.

The word راعنا which the Muslims

were forbidden to use can, as pointed out above, also be traced to the root راعن which means, a fool or a conceited person. When used in addressing a person, it takes the form of راعنا which may mean, "O fool" or "O conceited person".

The Jews, utterly depraved in mentality, resorted to these mean practices with a view to belittling the position of the Holy Prophet and undermining the spirit of respect in which he was held by his followers. The Quran has mentioned this incident with a twofold purpose; *firstly*, to expose the Jews and to bring home to them their mean and mischievous intentions; *secondly*, to teach the Muslims a lesson of respect and caution. For the testimony of the Ḥadīth to such incidents see Jarīr and Manthūr under 2:105.

### 112. Commentary:

The People of the Book and the pagan tribes of Arabia grudged the favours which were being bestowed by God on Muslims. In reply to this,

107. "Whatever Sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills?<sup>113</sup>

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ  
مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا ۗ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ  
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>16:102.

God says that He, being the Lord and Master of the entire Universe, could not forever bind Himself to one people but chose for His bounty whomsoever He pleased from among His creation. But now when He has chosen the Muslims, He is not confining His favours to one people only. The mission of the Holy Prophet being for all mankind, the call to come and receive God's favours is universal and hence no people need now show envy or grudge. With the advent of Islam the era of الفضل العظيم i.e. "exceeding (viz. universal) bounty" had dawned.

### 113. Important Words:

ننسخ (We abrogate) is derived from نسخ which has two meanings: (1) he abrogated or annulled, irrespective of the fact whether he brought another in its place or not; (2) he prepared a true copy of a book (Aqrab). It is from the latter sense that the word نسخة or "copy" is derived. From the former sense we derive the words ناسخ i.e. the thing which comes to abrogate another, and منسوخ i.e. the thing which is abrogated.

ننسها (We cause to be forgotten) is derived from نسي meaning, he forgot,

or he failed to preserve in his mind. نسي is the causative form of انسى meaning, he made a person forget a thing (Aqrab).

مثل (like) has three distinct uses: (1) either it is used to denote the like of a thing; (2) or it is used to denote a thing itself; (3) or sometimes it is redundant, giving no special meaning (Aqrab & Miṣbāḥ).

### Commentary:

Some commentators have attempted to infer from this verse that some of the verses of the Quran have been abrogated by others. But this conclusion is grievously erroneous and unwarranted. There is nothing in this verse to indicate that the word آية (Sign) occurring here refers to the Quranic verses. Both in the preceding and the following verses, a reference is made to the People of the Book and their jealousies for the new revelation, which clearly shows that the word آية spoken of in this verse as being abrogated, refers to the previous revelation. It is pointed out in this verse that the previous Scriptures contained two kinds of commandments. *Firstly*, those which, owing to the changed conditions of

the world and the universality of the new revelation, required abrogation; *secondly*, those containing eternal truths which did not require abrogation but simply resuscitation so that people might be reminded of the forgotten truth. It was, therefore, necessary (1) to abrogate certain portions and bring in their place new ones, and (2) to restore the lost ones. So, God abrogated some portions of the old Books, replacing them with new and better ones, and at the same time He re-introduced the missing portions by similar ones. This is the only meaning which is consistent with the context and the general spirit of Quranic teaching. In the verse the word نَسَخَ (We abrogate) relates to the words بَخِيرَ (one better) and the words نَسِهَا (cause to be forgotten) relate to the words مِثْلَهَا (the like thereof) meaning that when God abrogates a certain thing He brings a better thing in its place and when He causes a thing to be forgotten, i.e. when people forget a thing, He brings it over again, i.e. He resuscitates it.

The Jews themselves admit that after the Israelites were carried as captives to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the whole of the Pentateuch was lost (Enc. Bib, 653-654).

The meaning put on the verse by some Translators, *viz.*, that certain verses of the Quran stand abrogated is not only opposed to the words of the Quran and the context of the verse, but is also against reason; nor can any authentic saying of the Holy Prophet be quoted in its favour. On

the contrary, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the whole of the Quran must be strictly followed and he himself acted upon all its teachings throughout his life. Besides this, the Quran itself testifies to its own purity and integrity. The well-known verse: *Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation and most surely We will be its Guardian* (15:10) leads to no other conclusion. If the abrogation of any part of the Quran be conceded, the promise about its protection becomes null and void, for in that case it would be impossible to distinguish the abrogated portions from the rest of the Book. Again, there is absolutely no self-contradiction in the Quran, and therefore there is no need of resorting to the theory of abrogation. So-called contradictions only betray lack of deep study on the part of those who proclaim them. When one fails to understand two verses in their true relations, one is inclined to see a contradiction between them and then takes recourse to the convenient theory that one of the two verses must have been abrogated by the other. As soon as they appear to be reconcilable, the abrogation theory becomes gratuitous. This is why those who have upheld the abrogation theory have gradually been compelled to reduce the number of abrogated verses; for whereas the abrogated verses were formerly thought to be as many as 500, they have, by later scholars, been gradually reduced to only five. But even this is incorrect; for there is

108. Dost thou not know that "the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone? And there is no protector or helper for you beside Allah.<sup>114</sup>

109. <sup>b</sup>Would you question the Messenger sent to you as Moses was questioned before this? And

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مَلَكُ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ  
وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٠٨﴾

أَمْ تَرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا  
سَأَلَ مُوسَى مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ

<sup>a</sup>3:190; 5:41; 7:159; 9:116; 43:86; 57:6. <sup>b</sup>4:154.

absolutely no verse in the Quran which is abrogated and we challenge any critic to come forward and prove that any verse of the Holy Book is abrogated. It is a pity that such beautiful significance of the verse under comment should have, as has been briefly portrayed above, become marred through ignorance and thoughtlessness. The verse has a reference to yet another significance as well. The People of the Book have been told that the Quran has come to abrogate all previous Scriptures; for, in view of the changed conditions of mankind, it has brought a new *شريعة* (Law) which is not only better than all the old codes of Law, but is also meant for all men and all times. An inferior thing with a limited mission must give place to a superior thing with a universal mission. Having explained this point, the Quran proceeds to say that although its teachings are meant for all time, yet a period is destined to come in the life of Islam when, though the letter of the Quran would still be intact, its spirit would be forgotten and lost by

Muslims. When such a time comes, God will arrange to resuscitate the Quranic teachings, i.e. bring back "the like thereof" by raising a special Reformer from among Muslims. This prophecy is referred to more pointedly in 62:4 where God promises to raise a Reformer in the likeness of the Holy Prophet in the Latter Days. This Reformer, it is pointed out, would bring back the true faith to the world, even if it had soared away as high as the Pleiades (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*). The prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.

#### 114. Important Words:

ولى (protector). They say *ولى الرجل* i.e. he helped him; or he made friends with him. *ولى البلد* means, he got control or authority over the town. So *ولى* means: (1) friend; (2) helper; (3) protector; (4) ally, etc. (Aqrab).

#### Commentary:

In this verse an argument has been brought forth in support of the fact that Quranic revelation abrogates the

whoever takes disbelief in exchange for belief has undoubtedly gone astray from the right path.<sup>115</sup>

110. Many of the People of the Book wish out of *sheer* envy from their own selves, "that, after you have believed, they

الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١١٠﴾

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا ۖ

<sup>a</sup>3:101, 150; 4:90.

previous revelations. God says that to Him belongs the entire universe, the heavens and the earth, and it was in the fitness of things that finally a revelation meant for the whole of mankind should have made its appearance.

In the verse, the Jews are also told that it will be to their own interest to embrace Islam; for otherwise they will have neither friend nor helper against Allah.

There is a subtle implication in the verse, viz. that the Muslims, though despised and persecuted today, will not only receive spiritual favours from God, but will also become masters of large earthly kingdoms as well; for is not Allah the Controller of the heavens and the earth?

### 115. Important Words:

سواء (right) is derived from سَوَّى. They say سَوَّى الرَّجُلُ i.e. his affairs became straight and well. سواء means: (1) the central portion of a thing; (2) equal. سواء السَّبِيلِ means, the straight or right portion of a way; or a straight or right way (Lisān & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse mentions another artifice which the Jews employed to overthrow the mission of the Holy Prophet. They asked him absurd and silly questions as had no bearing on religion. This they did to inoculate Muslims with the same spirit of stupid questioning, so that their hearts might gradually become estranged from the dignity of faith and give way to doubt. In warning Muslims against such a course, the Quran points out that the Jews had ruined themselves by putting similar questions to Moses, and that the Muslims should, therefore, beware of following their evil example. In fact, unnecessary and irrelevant questions in religious matters eventually lead one to loss of faith, for they tend to degrade religion to a plaything or a piece of idle philosophy.

As to the nature of questions put to Moses by the Israelites, the Quran refers to one in 4:154. Says God: *The People of the Book ask thee to cause a Book to descend on them from heaven. They asked Moses a greater thing than this; they said, 'Show us*

could turn you again into disbelievers after the truth has become manifest to them. But <sup>a</sup>forgive and turn away from them, till <sup>b</sup>Allah brings about His decree. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.<sup>116</sup>

حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۖ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:14. <sup>b</sup>5:53; 16:34.

*Allah openly.' then a destructive punishment overtook them because of their transgression. Then they took the calf for worship after clear Signs had come to them, but We pardoned even that. And We gave Moses manifest authority. This verse gives us an indication as to the nature of the questions that were put to Moses, and Muslims are forbidden to put such questions to their Prophet.*

### 116. Important Words:

عفا (forgive) is derived from عفا. They say عفا عنه or عفا له or عفا ذنبه or عفا عن ذنبه meaning, he forgave and pardoned him and did not resort to punishment; he connived at his fault or offence. عفا الله عنه means, God obliterated the traces of his sin. عفا عن الشيء means, he withheld or restrained himself from it (Aqrab).

اصفحوا (turn away) is derived from صفع. They say صفع عنه meaning, he turned his face from it, he avoided it and left it alone; he pardoned him his sin. الصفع means, the side of a thing; or the side of a face, i.e. the cheek, etc. (Aqrab).

امر (decree). The verb امر means, he commanded or he enjoined or he asked. So امر means, a command; an

order; a decree; a judgement; an affair; a thing; a condition or state; an event. امر الله means, the promised or the decreed punishment of God (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

By manifold devices, some of which have been referred to above, the Jews wished to lead the Muslims astray, and their designs had their basis in jealousy. Muslims are exhorted not to quarrel with them but to wait patiently in a spirit of forbearance, till God Himself should finally decide the matter.

As explained under Important Words above, there is a subtle distinction between the meanings of عفو (forgive) and صفع (turn away). Whereas the former means, abstaining from punishment, the latter signifies, turning one's face away or leaving a thing alone. By using the words together, God exhorts Muslims not only to forgive the Jews and refrain from punishing them for their overt hostile acts and covert machinations, but to leave them alone and remain aloof from them till God Himself opened out a way for them, which He eventually did, as soon



111. And <sup>a</sup>observe Prayer and pay the Zakāh; and <sup>b</sup>whatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely, Allah sees all that you do.<sup>117</sup>

112. And they say, <sup>c</sup>‘None shall ever enter Heaven unless he be a Jew or a Christian.’ These are their vain desires. Say, ‘Produce your proof, if you are truthful.’<sup>118</sup>

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ وَمَا تَقَدَّمُوا لِنَفْسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١١﴾  
وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَى ۚ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۚ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:4. <sup>b</sup>73:21. <sup>c</sup>2:95; 62:7.

afterwards the Jews themselves declared war against the Muslims.

It is wrong to think that the words, *till Allah brings His decree*, refer to aggressive war. It is God’s general decree or judgement that is meant here, as may be inferred from the words that follow, viz. *surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*. Some of the Jews embraced Islam and the rest perished as a result of divine punishment.

The phrase, *out of envy from themselves*, means that the Holy Prophet had done nothing to excite their jealousy, but that it was their own evil nature that had given rise to it. The disease of حسد (jealousy) originated in their own hearts and had no infection from outside.

### 117. Commentary:

When one is subjected to continued persecution, one is apt to lose patience. But Muslims were enjoined

to meekly endure troubles and torments, and in order to be able to do so, they were ordered to resort to الصلاة (prayers to God) on the one hand, and to الزكاة (helping mankind) on the other. By so doing, they would acquire from God the power to endure.

The words, *whatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah*, contain a deep spiritual truth. Whatever good man does is kept in store for him by Allah and nothing is lost. Every good work is like a seed which may lie hidden from the public view but is all the time a large tree in the making. So the Muslims should not think that their Prayers and their Zakāh will be lost. They are sure to bring forth good fruit sooner or later.

### 118. Important Words:

هود (the Jews) has by some been looked upon as the plural of هائد

which is active participle from هَار meaning, he repented and turned towards the truth or towards God. In this sense هُود would mean, a people who have turned to God with repentance. The word هُود is a proper name for the Jews. The original and commoner word, however, is اليهود or يهود from which, according to some, the letter يَ has been dropped, leaving the word هُود (Aqrah). See also 2:63.

### Commentary:

So far Christians were not separately addressed. But now the Quran mentions them along with the Jews, indicating that their case was no better than that of the latter, both being under the delusion that one could obtain salvation merely by becoming a Jew or a Christian. They forgot the fact that when God had established a fresh covenant, salvation could not be possible without conforming thereto. If, however, the Jews and the Christians were justified in their claims, they should advance some reasons or scriptural evidence to show that it was enough for the purposes of salvation to join their folds. And they could not do it, because in their very Scriptures was foretold the appearance of a Prophet whom they were enjoined to accept and whose rejection was stated to lead to estrangement from God.

Christianity, as well as Judaism, was meant for the guidance of the Israelites alone. The mission of Jesus was not meant for the whole world

(Matt. 7:6; 10:6; 15:24; Mark 7:27). Though later on the followers of Jesus violated the limit imposed upon his mission and claimed universality for it, yet the hard fact remains that he was sent only for the Israelites, and his mission was to uplift that people alone. As other nations of the world are also the creation of God, it is therefore only right to believe that God must have made some arrangement for their guidance as well. Hence, it is quite unreasonable on the part of the Jews and Christians to hold that the door of salvation was closed against the followers of other faiths. Such a view would mean that God had confined salvation to certain tribes, to the exclusion of others, which is evidently absurd.

Islam, however, is not exposed to that objection. In the first place, it is not a tribal faith, but is universal in character. In the Quran, God enjoins the Holy Prophet to *Say, O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah (7:159)*. Similarly, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect, "I have been sent for the whole mankind while the Prophets before me were sent to particular peoples only" (Musnad).

Secondly, unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam does not hold Hell to be ever-lasting, but a place of reformation, where sinners will be purged of their sins to enable them to find their way ultimately to Heaven and enjoy the reward of whatever good deeds they had done in this world. On the other hand, Islam looks

113. Nay, <sup>a</sup>whoever submits himself completely to Allah, and is the doer of good, shall have his reward with his Lord. <sup>b</sup>No fear *shall come* upon such, neither shall they grieve.<sup>119</sup>

بَلَىٰ ۖ مَن أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ  
فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۖ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:126. <sup>b</sup>See 2:63.

upon the bounties of Heaven to be everlasting. With Jews and Christians, it is only the wish that has been father to the thought and nothing else. *Produce your proof, if you are truthful*, says the Quran.

### 119. Important Words:

بلى (nay) is used for تصديق (confirmation) and generally follows a question. It must be followed by a clause in the affirmative, whether the question which it follows is in the negative or affirmative. Thus in English it may either be rendered as yes or nay, as the case may be, but not as no (Aqrab & Lane).

اسلم (submits) is derived from سلم which means, he was or became safe and secure, or he escaped. سلم من العيب means, he became safe or free from defect and evil. اسلم which is both transitive and intransitive means: (1) he embraced Islam; (2) he resigned or submitted himself; (3) he paid in advance. اسلم وجهه لله means, he submitted or resigned himself wholly to God, or he devoted his entire attention to God, or he resigned himself to God (Lane & Aqrab).

وجهه (himself). وجه means: (1) face; (2) the part of a thing visible to the

sight of a looker on; (3) the thing itself; (4) direction; (5) object and motive; (6) deed or action to which a man directs his attention; (7) the desired way; (8) favour or countenance as in فعل ذلك لوجه الله i.e. he did it to obtain the favour or countenance of God (Aqrab).

محسن (doer of good) is derived from حسن meaning, he or it became good or beautiful. احسن اليه means, he did good to, or bestowed a favour on him. احسن الشيء means, he rendered the thing good or beautiful. احسان means, the doing of good; act of goodness; sincerity. الحسنى (feminine of الحسن) means: (1) success or victory; (2) best thing; (3) the view or vision of God; to see God (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The verse is important and explains a fundamental truth. In refutation of the claims of Jews and Christians to the monopoly of salvation, the Quran mentions the fundamental principle that for salvation it is not of any avail to be a Christian or a Jew, but that it lies in اسلام which signifies absolute surrender to God's will and unqualified compliance with His word. He who secures this secures

**R. 14.**

114. And the Jews say, <sup>a</sup>“The Christians stand on nothing”; and the Christians say, <sup>b</sup>“The Jews stand on nothing”; while they *both* read the *same* Book.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتْ النَّصْرَى عَلَى شَيْءٍ<sup>ص</sup> وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَى لَيْسَتْ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ<sup>ل</sup> وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ<sup>ط</sup>

<sup>a</sup>5:69. <sup>b</sup>5:69.

salvation; mere profession of a faith is not enough. The word محسن (the doer of good deeds), as also hinted under Important Words above, has been explained by the Holy Prophet as follows:

ان تعبد الله كأنك تراه فان لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك

i.e. "you may become a محسن only if you pray to or worship God in such a spirit of reality and certitude that you feel that you are seeing Him (and that God also is seeing you); or (with a lower degree of certitude) that you at least feel that God is seeing you." محسن also means, one who does good to God's creatures. Thus according to Islam, salvation lies, (1) in اسلام or absolute submission to the will of God; and (2) in true worship of God offered with a perfect degree of certitude; and (3) in doing good to one's fellow beings.

It is a distinctive feature of Islam that it makes its followers realize the presence of God and continued contact with Him a reality, and thus enables them to establish a true and permanent connection with Him even in this life. This is really the beginning of salvation. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has explained this verse in the following beautiful words:

"The verse alludes to the three important stages of perfect goodness, i.e. (1) فنا (self-annihilation); (2) بقا (regeneration); and (3) لقا (union with God). The words اسلم وجهه لله (submits himself completely to Allah) teach that all our powers and organs and whatever belongs to us should be surrendered to God and devoted to His service. This state is known فناء or death which a true Muslim must bring on himself...The second clause وهو محسن (and is the doer of good) alludes to the state of بقا or regeneration, for when a man is quickened by the love of God and all his movements become subservient to His will, his self dying entirely within him, he is, as it were, granted a new life which may be called بقا or regeneration. He lives for God, and through Him he lives for his fellow beings...The concluding words, (he) shall have his reward with His Lord. No fear shall come upon such, neither shall they grieve, describe the third or the final stage—the stage of لقا or union with God. It is the highest stage of knowledge, certainty, trust and love. The reward of one's sincerity and devotion is not obscure or doubtful. It is certain, visible, and, as it were, tangible. In this stage man is

Even thus said those who had no knowledge, like what they say. But Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they disagree.<sup>120</sup>

كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ  
قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ  
فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

so sure of the existence of God that he may be said to be actually seeing Him. No fear of the future darkens his faith. The dead past is buried and the living present has no sorrow for him. Every spiritual bliss is present. Such a state is termed **لقاء** or union with God" (Ā'inah).

### 120. Important Words:

**اليهود** (the Jews) signifies the followers of Moses or of what is known as Judaism. The word as already explained is either derived from **هَار** which means, he turned to God or to the truth with repentance (Aqrab); or it is derived from **يهودا** (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As the descendants of **يهودا** formed an independent kingdom at Jerusalem which became the religious centre of the Jews, therefore the Jewish religion came to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as **يهود** or Jews (Enc. Brit. under the word Jews. See also 2:63 and 2:112).

**يتلون** (they read) is derived from **تلا** which means: (1) he followed; (2) he read or recited (Aqrab). The Quran says **والقمر اذا تلاها** i.e. by the moon when it follows the sun; and again **يتلوا عليهم** i.e. the Prophet reads or recites to them God's Signs. In the present verse the word **يتلون** may be taken to

signify either of these two senses, i.e. they both read the same Book or they both follow the same Book. See also 2:103.

### Commentary:

Nothing is more foreign to the spirit of Islam than opposition to truth, wherever it may happen to be. Islam teaches that all faiths possess certain truths and the true religion is so called not because it has a monopoly of truth, but because it possesses all truth and is free from all defects. While, therefore, claiming to be a perfect and complete religion, Islam does not denounce other faiths but frankly acknowledges the truths and the virtues they possess. If this golden principle of Islam be properly understood and appreciated, much existing religious rancour and bitterness would disappear. But unfortunately, there is a general tendency among the followers of different religious systems to refuse to acknowledge the truth found in faiths, other than their own. The Quran declares this attitude of mind to be the result of lack of knowledge and wisdom, and this verse strongly condemns Jews and Christians for refusing to see any good whatever in the rival faith, in spite of the fact that they have a good deal in common,

115. And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the name of Allah being glorified in "Allah's temples and seeks to ruin them? It was not proper for such men to enter therein except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world; and theirs shall be a great punishment in the next.<sup>121</sup>

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا  
أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا  
خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي  
الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>9:17, 18; 22:26; 72:19, 20.

being the followers of the same Book—the Bible.

### 121. Important Words:

خرايبها (their ruin) is derived from خرب. They say خرب البيت i.e. the house became desolate and deserted. The word خراب which is infinitive from it is the opposite of عمارة i.e. to build or to occupy and live in, and is used about a place when it becomes deserted and desolate and ruined (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

This verse constitutes a strong indictment of those who carry their religious differences to such extremes that they do not even refrain from perpetrating outrages against the places of worship belonging to other creeds. They hinder people from worshipping God in their sacred places and even go so far as to destroy their temples. Such acts of violence are denounced here in strong terms and a lesson of tolerance and broad-mindedness is inculcated.

The Quran recognizes for all the free and unrestricted right to use their temples and declares that if people

wish to worship God in a place of worship, they should not be prevented from doing so; for a temple or a mosque is a place dedicated to the worship of God and anyone who prevents them from worshipping Him in it, in fact, contributes to its ruin and desolation.

This is what Islam teaches about respect for the places of worship, and yet it has come to be condemned as an intolerant religion. Islam is indeed the first and the only religion to inculcate broad-mindedness and teach respect for the religious susceptibilities of all peoples and the Holy Prophet was the first person who carried this great and noble principle into actual practice. He allowed the Christians of Najrān to hold their service in his own mosque, the celebrated مسجد النبي, when they came to have a religious discussion with him at Medina (Zurqānī).

It will be noted that the verse prescribes two punishments for those who prohibit the name of Allah being glorified in places of worship. One is disgrace in this world and the other is heavy punishment in the next. The

116. "To Allah belong the East and the West; so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah. Surely, Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.<sup>122</sup>

وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيُّمَا تَوَلَّوْا  
فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:143; 26:29; 55:18.

punishment of disgrace is typical of the offence; for a person who first builds a temple or a mosque with the object that the name of God may be remembered in it and then proceeds to prevent people from worshipping Him therein cannot but bring upon himself humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of the world. The words also contain a prophecy about the disbelievers of Mecca who prevented the Muslims from entering the Ka'bah. The prophecy was fulfilled when Mecca was taken and the infidels met with humiliation and disgrace. Finally, it may be noted that the verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran advocates the unqualified access for all sorts of persons to all places of worship without regard to circumstances. In fact, only those who wish to use them for the specific purpose of God's worship and have no ulterior motive are allowed.

### 122. Important Words:

ثم (there) is a word generally used to denote a place that is remote from the speaker, unlike the word هنا which denotes a place that is near (Aqrab).

وجه الله (face of God). As explained under 2:113 the word وجه means: (1) face; (2) attention; (3) the thing itself; (4) direction; and (5) object

and purpose (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse embodies a prophecy about the great and bright future of Islam. The Faithful are told that, being the teachers and proclaimers of truth and the bearers of Allah's standard, success would attend them wherever they went, and that through them Islam would spread all over the world, in the East as well as in the West. This prophecy was made at a time when the early Muslims—a mere handful of men—were being subjected to all sorts of trials and hardships and the future looked quite dark for them. But the prophecy was fulfilled not long after when, with the Fall of Mecca, the whole of Arabia entered the fold of Islam and within less than a century the flag of Islam was flying in almost all the lands of the then known world. The words, *to Allah belong the East and the West*, also hint that Islam was to spread first in the East, and then, after the advent of the Promised Messenger of the Latter Days, it will begin to penetrate the West. So let the West prepare for it, as the time is not far off.

The words, *so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah*, throw light on the very high stage of spiritual development to which the

117. And they say, "Allah has taken to *Himself* a son'. Holy is He! Nay, everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. <sup>b</sup>To Him are all obedient.<sup>123</sup>

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ ۖ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا  
فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ كُلٌّ لَّهِ  
قِسْطٌ ۝۷

<sup>a</sup>4:172; 6:101, 102; 10:69; 17:112; 18:5; 19:36, 89, 90; 21:27; 25:3; 39:5; 43:82. <sup>b</sup>30:27.

Companions of the Holy Prophet had reached. God was so pleased with them and so satisfied with their condition that He undertook to crown all their campaigns with success. The verse also implies that the Faithful would make no move that was not approved by God, and naturally therefore all their undertakings would meet with success.

### 123. Important Words:

قانتون (obedient) which is the plural of قانت is derived from قنت which means: (1) he obeyed; (2) he showed humility and submissiveness; (3) he remained silent, refraining from speech; and (4) he stood praying or he stood long in Prayer (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

The verse speaks of the Christians with whom the Muslims were to come in contact in their great march as the torchbearers of Islam. Failing to get converts from among the Jews, the early Christians turned their attention to the Romans and the Greeks but succumbed to their philosophies and freely borrowed ideas from them, incorporating them into their own beliefs and doctrines. As a result of this, Jesus began to be represented as the Son of God and

the dogma of Trinity became the basic doctrine of the Christian Faith. The expression "son of God" metaphorically used in Jewish religious literature in the sense of "a beloved servant of God" or "a Prophet" came to bear a literal connotation (Luke 20:36; Matt. 5:9, 45, 48; Deut. 14:1; Exod. 4:22; Gal. 3:26; Wisd. 2:18, etc.). The Quran has exploded this doctrine and has, in the verse under comment, given several arguments to expose its falsity: (1) If God has a son, He must be subject to sexual desires and need a wife and be divisible, because the son is a part of the father's body. Again, He must be subject to death because the procreation of species, which the attribution of a son to God implies, is the characteristic of perishable things. But Islam repudiates all such ideas; for according to it, God is Holy and free from all defects and weaknesses. (2) One sometimes needs a son or a successor to extend one's dominion and bring into subjugation such territories as do not acknowledge one's rule. But God has no such need; for *everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him*. (3) A son or helper is sometimes required to keep



118. *He is the <sup>a</sup>Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, <sup>b</sup>He does only say to it, 'Be!' and it is.*<sup>124</sup>

119. And those who have no knowledge say, 'Why does not Allah speak to us, or <sup>c</sup>a Sign come to us?' Likewise said those before them similar to

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ <sup>ط</sup> وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ  
أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ <sup>١١٨</sup>

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ  
أَوْ تَاتِينَا آيَةً <sup>ط</sup> كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ  
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ <sup>ط</sup> تَشَابَهَتْ

<sup>a</sup>6:102. <sup>b</sup>3:48; 6:74; 16:41; 36:83; 40:69. <sup>c</sup>6:38; 20:134; 21:6; 43:54.

under control the turbulent or far-flung parts of one's kingdom; but God has no such requirement, for "all are obedient to Him." Thus, from whatever angle we may view the question, God is proved to need no son, no helper or assistant to help Him in the work of controlling and managing the universe. In fact, it is blasphemy to say so. The argument is further elaborated in the next verse.

#### 124. Important Words:

بَدِيع (Originator) is derived from بَدَعَ which means, he originated a thing or brought it into existence newly (i.e. for the first time, the thing not having existed before) and not after the similitude of anything pre-existing (Lane). The word اَبْدَعَ (which is the infinitive form of بَدَعَ), when used about God, means, originating a thing without any tool or instrument or pattern and without matter (Mufradât). Thus the word combines the idea of originating and creating.

#### Commentary:

This verse not only contains a contradiction of the Christian dogma

of the Godhead of Jesus but also effectively repudiates the Hindu theory that the soul and matter are primeval and eternal. God has been declared here to be: (1) the Creator of the heavens and the earth which means that He did not require the help of a son, and for that matter of anybody, in creating the universe; (2) the Originator of the Universe, i.e., He created all things out of nothing, without a pre-existing model and without pre-existing matter; (3) All-Powerful, i.e. whenever He decrees that a certain thing should come into being, it does come into being in conformity with His decree and design. It may be noted here that the verse does not necessarily mean, as is sometimes erroneously understood, that when God decrees that a certain thing should be, it comes into being at once. The verse only means that God's will is all-powerful, so when He decrees a thing, nothing can thwart His decree. The verse does not thus refer to the factor of time, which may be short or long as God wills it.

their saying. Their hearts are alike. We have certainly made the Signs plain for a people who firmly believe.<sup>125</sup>

120. We have sent thee with the Truth, <sup>a</sup>as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell.<sup>126</sup>

قُلُوبَهُمْ <sup>ط</sup> قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ  
يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا  
وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٢٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:20; 6:49; 17:106; 33:46.

### 125. Commentary:

This verse refers to two very unreasonable demands of the People of the Book—Jews and Christians: (1) That God should speak to them directly and tell them that the Holy Prophet was His true Messenger; (2) That they should be shown Signs of their own devising.

In reply to the first demand, the Quran says that only ignorant people, unacquainted with the ways of God, make such a demand. This demand was made in the time of all the previous Prophets and was rejected as foolish. So it was unreasonable on their part to demand from the Holy Prophet something which their own Prophets had not complied with.

In reply to their demand for a Sign, they are told that signs are sufficient for the guidance of right-minded people have already been shown and they could, if they so desired, profit by them, but nothing could avail an obstinate and perverse person. The fact that a demand for a Sign was made from the Holy Prophet does not

show that no Signs had been shown by him. Indeed, if such a demand be considered as proof of the absence of Signs, no Prophet could be proved to have shown any Sign; for a similar demand was made from every Prophet of God, notably Jesus (Matt. 12:38, 39).

It may be also noted here that whenever disbelievers are spoken of as demanding an آية or Sign, the word means either a Sign of their own devising or a Sign in the form of divine punishment (see 21:6, 7; 6:38-51; 13:28-33; 20:134, 135; 29:51).

### 126. Commentary:

As to the disbelievers' demand for a Sign of punishment, the Quran says that punishment is bound to visit those who refuse to believe in the Holy Prophet, because, like all other Prophets, he was the bearer of glad tidings for believers, and a warner for his opponents. Every student of history knows how clearly this prophecy was fulfilled. The world witnessed the ruin of the Holy Prophet's adversaries in a manner

121. And <sup>a</sup>the Jews will by no means be pleased with thee, nor the Christians, unless thou follow their creed. Say, ‘Surely, Allah’s guidance alone is the guidance.’ <sup>b</sup>And if thou follow their evil desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have, from Allah, no friend nor helper.<sup>127</sup>

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ  
حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۖ قُلْ إِنْ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ  
هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۖ وَلَئِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ  
بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۚ مَا لَكَ مِنَ  
اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:112. <sup>b</sup>2:146; 13:38.

which has no parallel in history, although worldly conditions and circumstances were all in favour of the disbelievers and against the Holy Prophet.

The last-mentioned words of the verse, i.e. *thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell*, are a sort of consolation for the Holy Prophet who, owing to his great solicitude for the people who disbelieved in him, was ever anxious about their fate. Elsewhere the Quran says, *It may be thou wilt grieve thyself to death, because they believe not* (26:4).

### 127. Important Words:

ملة (creed) is derived from مل and means, among other things, religion; law of Shari‘ah; the right way (Lane).

اهواء (evil desires) is the plural of هوى (an evil desire). The verb هوى means, he or it fell or descended or came down from a higher position to a lower one. It also means, it rose or ascended. الهوى means, a desire; an evil or low desire; an evil inclination; love and attachment اتباع هواء means, he

followed his evil inclination, i.e. swerved from the way of rectitude (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The words, *if thou follow their evil desires*, though apparently addressed to the Holy Prophet, are really general in their application, being meant for his followers. The Holy Prophet has been described in the Quran as a model for mankind and a paragon of perfection (3:32; 33:22) and therefore he was infinitely above the possibility of complying with the evil wishes of the Jews and the Christians concerning the guidance he had directly received from God. At several other places in the Quran, the same form of address has been used. This is done to emphasize the importance of the commandment which is seemingly addressed to the Holy Prophet but is really meant for his followers (see 17:24). This mode of address is not peculiar to the Quran. In the Bible we come across similar instances (e.g. Deut. 16:21, 22).

122. <sup>a</sup>They to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed; it is these that believe therein. And whoso believes not therein, these are they who are the losers.<sup>128</sup>

**R. 15.**

123. O ye children of Israel! <sup>b</sup>remember My favours which I bestowed upon you, and that <sup>c</sup>I exalted you above all peoples.<sup>129</sup>

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ  
تِلَاوَتِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ  
يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ۝١٢٢

يٰٓبَنِي إِسْرَآءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي  
أَنعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى  
الْعَالَمِينَ ۝١٢٣

<sup>a</sup>3:114. <sup>b</sup>See 2:41. <sup>c</sup>See 2:48.

**128. Commentary:**

The words, *they to whom We have given the Book*, clearly refer here to Muslims and not to Jews and Christians, because it is the Muslims that were the true and sincere followers of the Quran and not Jews and Christians who refused to believe in the Quran and rejected it as a piece of fabrication. Jews and Christians have been referred to in the concluding portion of the verse where, owing to their rejection of the Quran, they are spoken of as the losers. The verse provides very high and well-merited praise for the Companions of the Holy Prophet who have been described as true followers of God's guidance.

**129. Commentary:**

Before proceeding to deal with the point that when the cup of the iniquities of the Jews became full to the brim, prophethood was

transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael, God in this verse again reminds the Jews of the manifold favours He had conferred upon them, and by inference also reminds them of their crimes and wickednesses.

The favours which God showered upon the Israelites from the time of Moses to that of Jesus are briefly recounted in the preceding verses along with a tale of their misdeeds and iniquities. Particular reference has been made to the reprehensible treatment they meted out to the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Muslims, and finally the whole subject has been briefly recapitulated in the above verse, forming an introduction to the new theme, i.e. the transfer of prophethood from the House of Isaac to that of Ishmael. With the advent of the Holy Prophet a new era had been ushered and those who rejected him could no longer bask in the sunshine of God's favours.

124. And fear the day when <sup>a</sup>no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, <sup>b</sup>nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor any intercession avail it, nor shall they be helped.<sup>130</sup>

125. And *remember* when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled, He said, ‘I will make thee a Leader of men. *Abraham* asked, ‘And from among my offspring?’ He said, ‘My covenant does not embrace the transgressors.’<sup>131</sup>

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ  
شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا  
شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ  
فَاتَّمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ  
إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ  
عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:49. <sup>b</sup>See 2:49. <sup>c</sup>2:131; 16:121, 122; 60:5.

### 130. Commentary:

This verse appears to deal with the same subject which has already been dealt with in 2:49; but on comparing the two, an interesting point of difference emerges. In the former verse the word شفاعة (intercession) is put before the word عدل (ransom), whereas in the present one the order has been reversed. The reason for this change is that, in his endeavour to save himself, it is natural for man to adopt a course which is least expensive and entails minimum amount of hardship. Failing this, he tries to adopt other measures. In other words, man has recourse to offer a ransom only when he finds that he cannot gain his release without offering it. In verse 2:49 this natural order is maintained and intercession

is put before ransom. But after that verse, many transgressions of the Israelites have been brought to light, especially their opposition to the Prophets, so now they could not rely much on intercession, and naturally felt constrained to think of offering a ransom first. Hence, the order observed in the former verse has been reversed in the latter. For a discussion of the subject of شفاعة etc. see note on 2:49 above.

### 131. Important Words:

ابتلى (tried) is derived from بلى which means, it became old and worn out. ابتلاه and بلّاه both mean, he tried or tested him or it, and this is so because a trial or a test makes one, as it were, old and worn out. بلّاء means, a trial or test whether resulting in praise or disgrace (Aqrah).

126. And *remember the time* when We made the House a resort for mankind and *a place of security*; and “take ye the station of Abraham as a place of Prayer. And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, *saying*, ‘Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain *therein* for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate *in Prayer*’.<sup>132</sup>

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا  
وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى  
وَعِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهْرًا  
بَيْتِي لِّلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ  
السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:98; 22:27.

امام (Leader of men) is derived from ام. They say ام بالقوم or ام القوم i.e. he led the people; he was or became Imām or leader of the people. The verb ام also means, he sought or aimed at a thing. The امام is a person whose example is followed, i.e. a leader or a model (Lane).

كلمات (commands) is the plural of كلمة and has a variety of meanings, e.g., a word; a clause or sentence; a command or order. Here it means, a command (Mufradāt). See also 2:38.

### Commentary:

It is pointed out in this verse that when God tried Abraham with certain commands and found him perfect in obedience, He expressed His wish to make him a Leader of men. Thereupon Abraham, ever solicitous to make others also share God's blessings, begged Him to extend the same to his progeny as well. In reply, he was told that this covenant would

not apply to transgressors, which implied that Leaders and Reformers would be raised from his posterity, but that transgressors would not share this blessing.

The Quran refers to this covenant in order to remind the Jews that their deprivation of prophethood was quite in conformity with the promise given to Abraham which contained a clear condition that such of his descendants as defied God's commandments would be deprived of the promised favour. The Jews are therefore told that being transgressors, they have been deprived of the blessing of prophethood. A brief reference to this covenant is also found in Gen. 17:9-14, but the Quran has mentioned it in a better and more definite form.

### 132. Important Words:

مثابة (a resort) is derived from ثاب which means, he returned. ثاب الناس means, the people gathered together.

المريض means, the patient returned to state of health. المئاب means, a place where people assemble; a place of resort; a place to which a visit entitles one to ثواب or reward (Mufradāt & Aqrab). See also 2:104.

طائفين (who perform the circuit) is the plural of طائف which is derived from طاف meaning, he performed a circuit, he went round (Aqrab).

عهدنا (We commanded) is derived from عهد which means, he promised. عهد الى فلان means, he enjoined upon or commanded him and made it a condition for him (Aqrab).

عاكفين (who remain for devotion) is the plural of عاكف which is derived from عكف. They say عكف في المكان i.e. he remained confined to a place, sticking to it. العكوف and الاعتكاف are words denoting a specified form of religious service in which the worshipper stays within the precincts of a mosque for a number of days which he passes in prayer and devotion (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

مقام (station) is derived from قام i.e. he stood. مقام means, a place where one stands (Aqrab). Here it means the Ka'bah, where Abraham stood worshipping God. مقام ابراهيم is also the name of a place near the Ka'bah where, after making circuits around it, the pilgrims perform two *rak'ats* of Prayer. It appears that after completing the construction of the Ka'bah, Abraham said a prayer there in token of his gratitude to God; and it is to commemorate this prayer of Abraham that Muslims are required to perform two *rak'ats* of Prayer

there whenever they make circuits round the Ka'bah,

### Commentary:

The verse means that a promise was made to Abraham that the Ka'bah would be made a مئابة or a place of reward and a centre where people would come together for worship. The truth of the first-mentioned part of the covenant, i.e. that the Ka'bah is a place of reward, can only be recognized by believers who irresistibly feel the ennobling influence of a visit to the Holy Shrine. But the truth of the latter part of the prophecy, i.e. that it would become a resort for men, has been established by the facts of history during the past fourteen hundred years, being testified to even by the enemies of Islam. The Ka'bah, as some traditions say and as hinted by the Quran itself, was originally built by Adam, and was, for sometime, the centre of worship for his progeny. Then in the course of time people became separated into different communities and adopted different centres for worship. Abraham then rebuilt the Ka'bah and it continued to remain a centre of worship for his progeny through his son Ishmael. But with the lapse of time it was virtually converted into a house of idols which numbered as many as 360—almost the same as the number of days in a year. At the advent of the Holy Prophet, however, the Ka'bah was again appointed the centre of worship for all nations, the Holy Prophet having been sent as a Messenger for

127. And *remember* when Abraham said, 'My Lord, <sup>a</sup>make this a town of peace and provide with fruits such of its dwellers as believe in Allah and the Last Day,' He said, 'And on him too who believes not will I bestow benefits for a little while; then will I drive him to the punishment of the Fire, and an evil destination it is.'<sup>133</sup>

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا  
أَمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ أَمَنَ  
مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ  
كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَى  
عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:98; 14:36; 27:92; 28:58; 29:68; 106:5.

all mankind. Thus, the nations which diverged after Adam were again brought together at the Ka'bah which was made the spiritual centre for all humanity and for all time.

Again, the Ka'bah, and, for that matter, the town of Mecca, is declared to be a place of peace and security. The truth of this prophecy is also beyond doubt. Mighty empires have crumbled and large tracts of land laid waste since the dawn of history, but the peace of Mecca has never been disturbed. The religious centres of other faiths have never claimed, and have in fact never enjoyed, such peace and immunity from danger. Jerusalem, Hardwar, Benares, etc., have all been conquered by alien conquerors and have been the scenes of much bloodshed and violence. But Mecca has ever remained a place of peace. No alien conqueror has ever entered it. The Sacred Town has always remained in the hands of those who have held it in reverence.

The commandment to purify the House of God refers not only to the outward cleaning of the House, but also to its purification from the abomination of idol-worship. The commandment was originally addressed to Abraham and Ishmael but it was finally and fully carried out by the Holy Prophet who, after the conquest of Mecca, cleared the Ka'bah of all the 360 idols that had been placed there by the idolatrous Quraish.

### 133. Important Words:

مصير (destination) is derived from صاء meaning, he returned, or he became. مصير is thus a place or condition to which a person or thing comes or returns; a destination (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

When Abraham offered the prayer, there was no town existing near the Ka'bah. There existed only the House of God. So Abraham prayed that in that wildest of wildernesses there might grow up a town, and that that



128. And *remember the time* when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, *praying*, ‘Our Lord, <sup>a</sup>accept *this* from us; for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.<sup>134</sup>

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ  
وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ  
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>14:41.

town might become a place of security, affording peace to mankind. In fulfilment of this prayer, there grew up the town of Mecca which has remained a place of peace and security for thousands of years. The prayer also implied that the *Baitullāh*, would be the means of bringing peace and security to mankind. This was destined to come about in two ways: *Firstly*, those who accepted and followed Islam were to become secure from all evils and to become recipients of God’s blessings. *Secondly*, Islam was to be the means of bringing about peace and concord among the different nations of the world.

While praying to God to grant sustenance to the dwellers of Mecca, Abraham restricted his prayer only to its good and righteous dwellers. The reason for this was that when Abraham had previously prayed to God to raise Reformers and Religious Leaders from his progeny, God had replied that such men would be raised from among the righteous only (2:125). So when he prayed a second time to God to grant sustenance to the people of Mecca, he was more careful and confined his prayer to the

righteous only. This shows how submissive and careful God’s Prophets are. But Abraham had now evidently become overly cautious, for this time God answered, saying, that He would grant sustenance to all men, irrespective of whether they were righteous or not, because He was the Provider for the whole universe, not for the righteous only. The wicked, however, shall be duly punished for their crimes.

Another reason why Abraham restricted his prayer to the righteous was that he wished Mecca to be the abode of the righteous alone; but God knew that even that sacred town was not going to remain untarnished throughout the long centuries of history.

### 134. Commentary:

When the unfitness of the Israelites for prophethood had been proved, the question naturally arose: What nation would then be the rightful heir to this favour of God? To answer this, reference is here made to the history of the building of the Ka’bah by Abraham and Ishmael, and it is added (vv. 128-130) that while constructing the Ka’bah, Abraham and Ishmael

had offered certain prayers which were to bear fruit. These prayers were to the effect that the children of Abraham through Ishmael might multiply and prosper and there might be raised among them a great Prophet. Whether Abraham was the founder or only the rebuilder of the Ka'bah is a point that has given rise to much discussion. Some hold that Abraham was the first builder of the place, others trace the origin of the House to the days of Adam and hold that Abraham only rebuilt it on its old ruins. The Quran and authentic traditions favour the view that even prior to the erection of a building on this site by Abraham, some sort of structure did exist. Even in the verse under comment the words القواعد من البيت which may mean "the foundations that were left of the house," hint at the fact that a previous structure did exist but it had fallen into ruins and only a trace of the foundations remained. Elsewhere the Quran speaks of the Ka'bah, as *the first House founded (or built) for (the good of) mankind* (3:97). Now as people lived even before Abraham and some Prophets had also been raised before him, it stands to reason that some place of worship did exist for them and as the Ka'bah is the first house of that nature, it must be taken to have priority over all others.

Moreover, the Quran represents Abraham offering the following prayer at the time of his separation from Ishmael and his mother at Mecca: *Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable*

*valley near Thy Sacred House* (14:38). From this verse it is clear that the Ka'bah existed even before Abraham.

The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. Describing the retreat of Abraham after leaving Hagar and Ishmael at the place where Mecca now stands, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Hagar inquired of Abraham why he was leaving them in a valley without any friend or sympathizer and without any food to eat. She asked the same question several times, but Abraham (probably overpowered by feelings) kept silent and made no reply. At last, she asked whether he was doing this under the order of God, and this time Abraham replied in the affirmative. Thereupon, Hagar said that in that case God would never let them perish. Then Abraham returned, and standing on a hillock, where he could not be seen by Hagar, he turned his face to the Ka'bah, and raising both of his hands, offered the prayer: *Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House* (Bukhārī).

The above narrative related by the Holy Prophet shows that even before Abraham's going to the place where Mecca now stands, it was held sacred, or else how could he have turned his face to it while offering the prayer and how could he have used the words "near Thy Sacred House". Nor does history say anything contrary to this view, because whatever information can be gleaned

from it points to the fact that the Ka'bah is a very old place. Historians of established authority and even some hostile critics of Islam, have admitted that the Ka'bah has been held sacred from time immemorial. In this connection the following quotation may also be of interest. "Diodorus Siculus, Sicily (60 B.C.), speaking of the region now known as Hejaz, says that it was 'specially honoured by the natives' and adds, 'an altar is there built of hard stone and very old in years,...to which the neighbouring peoples thronged from all sides' (Translation by C. M. Oldfather, London, 1935, Book III, ch. 42 vol. ii. pp. 211-213). "These words", says William Muir, "must refer to the holy house of Mecca, for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia...Tradition represents the Ka'bah as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from all quarters of Arabia...So extensive an homage must have had its beginnings in an extremely remote age" (Muir, p. ciii).

Some Christian critics question the truth of the claim that Abraham came to the site of Mecca and built the Ka'bah on the flimsy ground that the Bible is silent about it. It is not difficult to see the absurdity of this objection. There is no denying that the story of Abraham's leaving his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael in a desert, the want of water, the extreme thirst of the boy and the providential appearance of a well are all mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 21:14-19). As, however, the Bible gives an

extremely brief account of Ishmael's life, owing to the antipathy of the Jews towards him, it is not safe to decide the matter solely on the authority of the Bible. It is an open secret that the sons of Israel looked upon the sons of Ishmael as their enemies. Therefore, far from preserving any record of the life of Ishmael, the Israelites were more likely to delete even such mention of him as might already have been contained in the Bible. At any rate, the Christians have no historical ground to reject the narrative of the Quran, especially when the well-known national traditions of Arabia all go to confirm it. Even some Christian writers have felt constrained to admit that the story of the Quran and the Traditions is true, or, at least, highly probable. "Freitag (Einl. p. 339) says that there is no good reason for doubting that the Caaba was founded as stated in this passage" (Rodwell under 2:128). Lieut. Burton in his *Pilgrimage* (iii. 336) refers to the Arab tradition which he says "speaks clearly and consistently as to the fact of Abraham having visited Mecca to build the Caaba", and considers it not to be without foundation. The Jerusalem Targum also speaks "of the visits of the 'very old man' Abraham to the tent of his nomad son, far away in the Arabian desert" (Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 84). The Talmud supports the view that Abraham went twice to see Ishmael after the latter had grown up to be a young man and had married (Selections translated by H. Polano, London, Tamuz 5636, p. 51).

129. Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee and *make* of our offspring a people submissive to Thee. And show us our ways of worship, and turn to us with mercy; for Thou art Oft-Returning *with compassion and Merciful*.<sup>135</sup>

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا  
أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ ۖ وَارِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ  
عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾

130. And, our Lord, raise up among them <sup>a</sup> Messenger from among themselves, who may

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو  
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ

<sup>a</sup>2:152; 3:165; 62:3.

### 135. Important Words:

مناسكنا (our ways of worship). The word مناسك is the plural of منسك which is derived from نسك which means, he devoted himself to religious worship; he performed acts of worship for God; he slaughtered animals of sacrifice to win God's pleasure. مناسك الحج means, the religious rites or ceremonies of Pilgrimage; and also the places where these ceremonies are performed (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

Having built the House, Abraham and his son Ishmael turn towards God with the supplication that He may afford them the power to lead a life of devotion and submissiveness and show them the ways of such worship as may be performed in the Ka'bah.

This prayer of Abraham and Ishmael also brings out the very important point that even such righteous persons who stand high in the estimation of God need constant prayer for the further purification of

their souls and for the consecration of their good deeds by God, because, however noble and righteous the deeds of man may outwardly appear to be, they sometimes lack the true inner spirit and lead to evil consequences.

Abraham and Ishmael here use the words مسلم (Muslim) for themselves and also pray that from among their posterity too there may be born مسلم (Muslim) people who may be submissive and resigned to the will of God. This helps to explain another verse of the Quran which says of Abraham that it was he who first gave the name "Muslim" to the believers in the Holy Prophet (22:79). It is not of course meant that Abraham used the word مسلم in the above quoted verse as a proper name, but his using that word in his prayer certainly suggests that from among his progeny would be born a people who would not only bear that name but would also possess the spirit of اسلام i.e. submission to the will of God.

recite to them Thy Signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.'<sup>136</sup>

وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَزَكَّيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ  
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝٣٠ ع

### 136. Important Words:

آيات (Signs) is the plural of آية which means, a sign, token, or mark by which a person or thing is known or recognized; it properly signifies any apparent thing inseparable from a thing not equally apparent, so that when one perceives the former, one knows that one also perceives the latter which one cannot perceive by itself; it also means a miracle, a wonder. The word is also used in the sense of a sentence; a part of speech; a verse (Lane & Aqrab).

كتاب (Book) means, anything written; a book; a prescribed law (Aqrab). See also 2:54.

حكم (Wisdom) is derived from حكم (ḥakama). They say, حكمه i.e. he prevented or restrained him (from acting in an evil manner). حكم بالامر means, he judged and decreed in the matter. حكم (ḥakuma) means, he became wise (Aqrab). حكمة means, what prevents or restrains one from ignorant behaviour; knowledge or science; knowledge of the true nature of things; wisdom or wisdom underlying a commandment; an action according to the requirements thereof (Mufradāt & Lane).

يزكّهم (purify them) is derived from زكى (zakkā) which again is derived from زكّ meaning, he or it grew and

increased and developed; he or it became purified. زكى means, he purified; he caused to grow and increase. تزكية means, the act of purifying and increasing (Aqrab).

عزير (the Mighty) is derived from عز i.e. he was or became mighty, potent or powerful; or high, elevated or illustrious; or hard and resisting. عزيز means, mighty and powerful or high and elevated; or hard and resisting. It also sometimes means, distressing or grievous. العزيز used as the attributive name of God means, the Mighty Who overcomes everything; the Incomparable or Unparalleled (Lane). See also 2:207 and 5:55.

الحكيم (the Wise) is derived from the same root from which حكمة (for which see above) is derived. حكيم means, possessing knowledge or science or wisdom; wise; a sage; a philosopher; a physician; one who performs or executes affairs firmly, soundly, thoroughly, skilfully and well. الحكيم is one of the names of God meaning the All-Wise (Lane). Applied to the Quran the word would signify the book that is full of wisdom and is free from all defect and imperfection, having no incongruity or unsoundness; or the book which judiciously decides religious differences.

### Commentary:

In this verse which is one of the most important, attention is drawn to the prayer of Abraham when he was leaving his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael to live in the arid valley of Mecca. The great prayer was to the effect that God might raise from among the Meccans a Prophet, who should (1) lay before the people Signs of God that may carry conviction to their minds; (2) teach them the Law of God; (3) initiate them into the philosophy of divine commandments, because until the wisdom underlying a commandment is brought home, one does not feel disposed to attend to it, but rather looks upon it as a burden, as was the case with the Christians who, unable to understand the underlying wisdom of the Mosaic Law, began to look upon it as a curse (Rom. 4:15; Gal. 3:13); and finally (4) purify the lives of men and open out to them the avenues of progress. See also 2:152.

This prayer of Abraham, offered from the very depth of his heart, was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet. The wonderful way in which the Holy Prophet combined in his person the four characteristics mentioned in this prayer is a fact of history to which even his most hostile critics have testified. By universal consent the Prophet of Islam has been acclaimed as "the most successful Prophet".

The fact that Abraham did not here pray for many Prophets, but for one Prophet only shows that while offering this prayer, he had in view a

very great Prophet, a Master-Prophet who was to transcend all. This prayer of Abraham has been applied by the Holy Prophet to himself. He is reported to have said انا دعوة ابراهيم i.e. "I am the prayer (personified) of Abraham" (Jarīr & 'Asākir).

As mentioned in the introductory remarks in the beginning of this chapter, the verse under comment serves as a summary of the entire chapter which is not only an enlargement of the subject matter of this verse but treats its various subjects in exactly the same order in which they have been mentioned in this verse, i.e. first come the Signs, then the Book, then the Wisdom of the Law, and last of all the means of national progress.

It may be of interest to note here that the Quran speaks of two separate prayers of Abraham—one about the progeny of Isaac and the other about that of Ishmael. The former prayer has been mentioned in 2:125 and the latter in the verse under comment. In his prayer about the progeny of Isaac, Abraham asks that Imāms or Reformers may be raised from among them, but he makes no mention of their special work or status—they are ordinary Reformers who will follow one another for the reformation of the Israelites. On the other hand, when Abraham prays about the progeny of Ishmael, he begs his Lord to raise among them a special Prophet with a specific and lofty mission. Again, when God answers the first-mentioned prayer of Abraham, He does not make any mention of the

Reformers to be raised but leaves their appearance to be inferred only by implication; but He does make a pointed reference to the fact that in spite of these Reformers, the Israelites will end as transgressors. On the contrary, God makes no such mention about the progeny of Ishmael, thereby hinting that after the Promised Prophet has been raised, their glorious days will continue till the end of the world. This is indeed a marvellously true portrait of the two branches of the House of Abraham.

In making mention of the prayers of Abraham in verses 127 to 130 the Quran makes an allusion to the fact that Abraham did not only pray for the prosperity of the children of Isaac but also for the posterity of Ishmael, his firstborn. When the offspring of Isaac lost the gift of prophethood on account of their evil deeds, the next descendants of Abraham were the children of Ishmael and thus the Promised Prophet must belong to the House of the latter. In order to point out that the expected Prophet was to be an Ishmaelite, the Quran makes mention of the construction of the Ka'bah by Abraham and Ishmael and of the prayers offered by Abraham for the posterity of his eldest son.

To this natural conclusion Christian critics generally bring forward two objections (1) that the Bible makes no mention of any promise having been made by God to Abraham concerning Ishmael, and (2) that, admitting that God did make such a promise, there is no proof of the fact that the Prophet of Islam was descended from Ishmael.

As regards the first objection, it should be borne in mind that even if the Bible be shown to contain no prophecy about Ishmael, the absence of such a mention in it cannot be considered as conclusive testimony that such a prophecy was not actually made. It is no secret that Sarah, the mother of Isaac, hated Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. This hatred of their mother for the House of Ishmael was inherited by her sons, the Israelites (Gen. 16:12). In these circumstances it would be idle to search for any express prophecy in favour of Ishmael and his progeny in the Bible; particularly when it was for a long time subjected to all sorts of interference on the part of the Israelites. Moreover, if the Biblical evidence can be taken to establish the existence of a promise about Isaac and his sons, why should not the evidence of the Quran and, for that matter, of the children of Ishmael, be accepted to establish the fact that promises were held out by God to Ishmael and his sons also. But the undeniable fact is that the Bible does contain references to the future prosperity of the sons of Ishmael similar to those it contains about the sons of Isaac. The following are some of these references:

(1) "And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:9, 10). This covenant was made

with Abraham before the birth of Isaac and after Ishmael had been born, which shows that it applied to Ishmael and his children.

(2) "And the angel of the Lord said unto her (Ishmael's mother), I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man (it appears that here some expression like "Arab" or the dweller of a desert country, has been translated as "wild"); his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren"; i.e., although all will constantly oppose him and be jealous of him, yet he will succeed (Gen. 16:10-12).

(3) Further evidence of Ishmael and his posterity being included in the covenant which God established between Himself and Abraham and his seed after him is furnished by Gen. 17:6-8 which says, "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Now, has not the land of

Canaan remained in the possession of the Ishmaelites for over 1,300 years? If the Arab Muslims are not the seed of Abraham, why has Canaan continued in their possession for so long?

(4) Again in Gen. 17:18-20, we read:

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! and God said,...And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." It will thus be seen that the promises made for Ishmael are similar to those made for Isaac; nay, they are even greater in number, for, with regard to Ishmael, God says, (a) "I have blessed him"; (b) "I will make him fruitful"; (c) "I will multiply him exceedingly"; (d) "twelve princes shall he beget"; and (e) "I will make him a great nation".

(5) Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was included in God's covenant is furnished by the fact that circumcision which was instituted by God as a token of His covenant with Abraham and his seed after him, has continued among the descendants of Ishmael. Though Islam also enjoined it, yet it was already in vogue among the Arabs, which shows that they were the seed of Abraham and were consequently included in the covenant of which circumcision was instituted as a symbol.

In order to exclude Ishmael from God's covenant, Christian writers



sometimes bring forward the plea that the offspring of a handmaid cannot be included in Abraham's seed. But this is entirely baseless; for, even conceding, for the sake of argument, that Ishmael's mother was a handmaid, it has been clearly said with reference to Ishmael: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation because he is thy seed" (Gen. 41:13).

The above-quoted verses of the Bible show (1) that Ishmael was born according to the promise of God given to Abraham before Ishmael's birth; (2) that God blessed Ishmael and his mother, Hagar; (3) that He promised to make Ishmael and his mother fruitful and to multiply them exceedingly; (4) that God was with Ishmael; and (5) that the covenant of God with Abraham about the circumcision of every male child among his progeny applied to Ishmael and his children.

As a matter of fact, the promise made to Ishmael does not differ very much from that made to Isaac; they are both to be blessed, both to be made fruitful, the descendants of both to multiply exceedingly and both are to be made great nations, and kingdom and dominion is promised to the progeny of both. So when the nature of the promise made to both the brothers does not substantially differ, the kind of reward granted to the children of Isaac will have also to be admitted for the children of Ishmael. It would be wrong to think that as in Gen. 17:21 it is written that God will establish His covenant with

Isaac, so Prophets were meant to be raised from among his children only, for a similar covenant was made with Abraham even before the birth of Isaac, and this clearly applied to Ishmael. This covenant is contained in Gen. 17:10, 11 according to which Ishmael was circumcised at the age of 13 and thenceforward circumcision became a religious rite with the posterity of Ishmael. It is therefore beyond any shadow of doubt that the covenant referred to above was intended for the children of Ishmael quite as much as for the children of Isaac. This fact has even been admitted by some eminent Christian writers of established authority (The Scofield Reference Bible, p. 25).

So far about verbal promises. Now let us see how God practically treated Ishmael. We read in Gen. 21:14-20, "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

This shows that God rendered miraculous help to Ishmael and brought into existence a well of water for his sake. It is now for the Christians to show what extraordinary thing God wrought for Isaac that may be compared with this. In the above passage it is also said that "God was with the lad", which means that Ishmael grew up under the special protection of the Lord.

Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was looked upon as the seed of Abraham, on a par with Isaac, is furnished by the following circumstances:

In Gen. 25:6, we read that when Abraham grew old and was nearing his end, he sent away the sons of the concubines. And then the Bible goes on to say: "And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred three score and fifteen years, and Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah." (Gen. 25:7-9). Now, if Ishmael was also treated as the offspring of a concubine, he ought to have been treated as the other children, who were the issue of

concubines, were treated. But such was not the case; for when Abraham died, the children of the concubines were away and only Ishmael and Isaac were present, and both of them participated in the burial ceremony of their father. This shows that Ishmael was not treated as the offspring of a concubine, but was looked upon as the equal of Isaac and was treated accordingly.

In reply to the second objection that even if the covenant be understood to include the sons of Ishmael, it is yet to be proved that the Holy Prophet belonged to the House of Ishmael, the following points may briefly be noted:

(1) The best way to know the origin of a race is to refer to the traditions and the testimony of the race itself; and, as we all know, the Quraish, the tribe to which the Holy Prophet belonged, always believed and declared themselves to be the descendants of Ishmael and this claim was recognized by all the people of Arabia.

(2) If the claim of the Quraish and, for that matter, that of other Ishmaelite tribes of Arabia, to Ishmaelite descent had been false, the real descendants of Ishmael would have protested against such a false claim; but no such objection is known to have been ever raised.

(3) In Gen. 17:20 God had promised to bless Ishmael, to multiply his progeny, to make him a great nation and the father of twelve princes. If the people of Arabia are not his descendants, where is the promised nation? The Ishmaelite

tribes of Arabia are indeed the only claimants in the field,

(4) According to Gen. 21:8-14 Hagar had to leave her home in order to satisfy the vanity of Sarah. If she was not taken to Hedjaz, where are her descendants found, and which is the place of her banishment?

(5) After her banishment Hagar dwelt in the wilderness of Paran (Gen. 21:21). Christian writers have tried to prove that Paran is Feiran near Jebel Serbal in the Sinai Peninsula. But the great English commentator of the Old Testament, who devoted his whole life to the study of the Bible, Dr. S. R. Driver, has had to confess after all that "the site of Paran, from which the wilderness derives its name, is, however, unknown" (Deut. p.4). On the contrary, the Arab geographers are all agreed that Paran is the name given to the hills of Hedjaz (Mu'jamul-Buldān).

(6) We are told that the generations of Ishmael "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur" (Gen. 25:18) and the phrase "from Havilah unto Shur" designates the opposite extremes of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. by J. Eadie, London, 1862).

(7) The Bible calls Ishmael "a wild man" (Gen. 16:12) and the word اعرابي (*A'rābī*) "a dweller of the desert" conveys almost the same sense.

(8) Even Paul has admitted Hagar's connection with Arabia (Gal. 4:25).

(9) Kedar was a son of Ishmael and it is admitted that his descendants settled in the southern part of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. London, 1862).

(10) Prof. C. C. Torrey says: "The

Arabs were Ishmaelites according to the Hebrew tradition...The 'twelve princes' (Gen. 17:20) subsequently named in Gen. 25:13ff, represent Arabian tribes or districts; notice especially Kedar, Duma (Dumatul-Jandal), Teima. The great nation is the people of Arabia." (*Jewish Foundation of Islam*, p.83).

(11) Similarly, the learned authors of the Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature, New York, (1877, p. 685) admit that "the Arabs, from physical characteristics, language, the occurrence of native traditions...and the testimony of the Bible are mainly and essentially Ishmaelites."

(12) Lastly there is the opinion of Narsai, a Syrian writer who lived about a hundred years before the birth of the Holy Prophet. Mingana quotes Narsai as saying: "The raid of the sons of Hagar was more cruel even than famine, and the blow that they gave was more sore than disease; the wound of the sons of Abraham is like the venom of a serpent and perhaps there is a remedy for the poison of reptiles but not for theirs—let us always blame the foul inclination of the sons of Hagar, and specially the people (the tribe) of Kuraish who are like animals." (Leaves from Three Ancient Qurans, edited by the Rev. A. Mingana, D.D. Intro. xiii).

In the face of these conclusive proofs both the objections, that (1) Ishmael was not included in the covenant which God made with Abraham, and that (2) Ishmael did not settle in Arabia or that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not a descen-

**R. 16.**

131. And who will turn away from "the religion of Abraham but he who is foolish of mind?"<sup>b</sup> Him did We choose in this world, and in the next he will surely be among the righteous.<sup>137</sup>

وَمَنْ يَّرْغَبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ<sup>ط</sup> وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا<sup>ج</sup> وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لِمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ<sup>⑬٧</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:96; 4:126; 6:162. <sup>b</sup>2:125; 3:34; 16:121, 122; 60:5.

dant of Ishmael, fall to the ground.

Before passing on to the next verse a brief reference to Hagar, mother of Ishmael, will not be out of place here. C. J. Ellicott, Lord Bishop of Gloucester, says in his Commentary: "Hagar...was to be, not Abraham's concubine, but his wife" (Vol. 1, p. 69). The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel tell us that "Sarah...took Hagar...and set her free, and gave her to Abraham, her husband, to wife" (Translation by J. W. Etheridge, London, 1862, p. 205). This setting free of the "handmaid" or "bondwoman" does not imply that Hagar was a barbarian slave or that she was a slave from her very childhood. Sir Leonard Wooley says that she was a "civilised creature sprung from the second great centre of culture in the ancient world" (Abraham, London, 1936, p. 144).

"According to Midrash", says another authority, "Hagar had been given as a slave to Abraham by her father, the Pharaoh of Egypt, who said, "My daughter had better be a slave in the house of Abraham, than mistress in any other" (Translation of

the Targums by J. W. Etheridge, note 8, on page 204).

**137. Important Words:**

يرغب (will turn away) is derived from رغب which is used either with the preposition في or عن giving different meanings. رغب فيه means, he sought or desired it; and رغب عنه means, he turned away from it or he left or loathed it (Aqrab).

سفه نفسه (is foolish of mind). The word سفه is used in three different forms: سفه (1) (*safiha*), (2) (*safaha*), and (3) (*safuha*). All these give different meanings. The Quran uses the first form, i.e. سفه (*safiha*) which means, he was ignorant or he behaved ignorantly; he was foolish or he acted foolishly; he was lightwitted or he behaved light-wittedly. When the word سفه is used with نفسه as its seeming object as in the verse under comment, it does not actually become transitive but simply looks so (as does the verb خسر which see under 2:28). In fact, as most lexicographers have explained, the expression سفه نفسه is really either سفه في نفسه or سفه هو نفساً or سفهت نفسه and means, either he is foolish of mind, or he is foolish

132. When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, "I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds".<sup>138</sup>

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمُ<sup>١٣٢</sup> قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ  
لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ<sup>١٣٣</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:68; 4:126.

himself, or his mind acts foolishly (Aqrab, Mufradât, Lisân & Lane).

اصطفيناه (him did We choose) is derived from صفا which means, it became pure and clean. اصفاه بكذا means, he chose him for that, or he honoured him with that. اصطفاه means, he chose or selected him from among others; he chose him in preference to others (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The attention of Jews and Christians is drawn to the point that when it has been proved that, in accordance with the prayer of Abraham, a Prophet was to appear from among the children of Ishmael and that Prophet has actually appeared, it is incumbent upon them to ponder over his claims and not to belie the prayer of Abraham and go against their own religion. The verse emphasizes the fact that anybody who departs from the way of the great patriarch of the People of the Book betrays his own folly. The religion of Abraham leads to salvation, whereas defection from it leads to ruin and deprivation.

### 138. Important Words:

اسلم (submit), being in the imperative mood, means, submit or surrender or resign thyself; or become a Muslim, i.e. one resigned to God.

For a fuller discussion of the word see 2:113.

### Commentary:

The Jews are here told that the greatness of their ancestor Abraham lay in the fact that he was always ready to submit fully and resign himself completely to the will of God. Therefore, if they too wish to become great in the sight of God, they should also submit to Him and obey His commands and accept His Prophet.

The verse beautifully describes Abraham's religion. When God asked him to submit, he immediately replied, *I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds*. This reply of Abraham points to two important inferences: (1) That Abraham does not use the words "I will submit" or even "I do submit" but *I have submitted*, which means that he was so eager to obey his Lord that he took no time in making his submission, as if the act were already a thing accomplished. (2) That Abraham does not merely say *I have submitted*, but adds the words *to the Lord of the worlds*, which signifies that his submission was not based on any ulterior motive but on the simple fact that the "Being" to Whom he was submitting was the Lord and Master of the world and hence entitled to obedience.

133. The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons,—and so did Jacob—*saying*: ‘O my sons, truly Allah has chosen this religion for you; <sup>a</sup>so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission.’<sup>139</sup>

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ  
يٰبَنِيَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰى لَكُمْ الدِّيْنَ  
فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ۝۱۳۹

<sup>a</sup>3:103.

### 139. Important Words:

وصى (did enjoin upon). وصى فلانا بكذا means, he enjoined this upon him, he ordered him to do this, he charged him with this. وصى عليه بالصلاة means, he exhorted him or enjoined him to observe Prayers. وصى له بماله means, he made a will in his favour, making him heir of his property after his death (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

Abraham not only submitted himself to the will of God but also took special care that his children too should inculcate that spirit and lead lives of submission and resignation. The name of Jacob or Israel (grandson of Abraham) has been particularly added here to point to the fact that as Jacob also issued a similar injunction to his children, it becomes all the more binding on the Israelites to submit to the will of God and accept the Prophet who has come with the specific mission of اسلام i.e. submission to God's will.

The words, *so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission*, beautifully point to the fact that as nobody knows

the time of his death, one should always lead a life of submission to God's will so that whenever death comes, it may not find one in a state other than that of submission. The words may also mean that a true believer should be so perfectly resigned to God's will and should so completely win His pleasure that He may, out of His limitless bounty, arrange that death may not come to him except at a time when he is resigned to His will.

This, as well as the preceding verse, forcefully brings out the important point that Islam really means absolute obedience and complete submission to the will of God. Only he who is completely resigned to the will of God is a true Muslim. Thus every true pre-Islamic religion that inculcated the spirit of submission will, within this meaning of the term, fall under the true definition of Islam, because previous to the religion preached by the Holy Prophet, to follow Islam was to obey the then expressed will of God, or, in other words, the revelation of the day. The point of difference between the religion brought by the Holy Prophet and the

134. Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons, 'What will you worship after me?' They answered, 'We will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves.'<sup>140</sup>

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ  
الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنِّي  
بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ  
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا  
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

other true preceding faiths is—although they are Islamic in essence—those faiths were not called by the name of Islam, the reason for this being that they were not perfect and each of them was to be replaced by a succeeding one, and so, if all these had been given the name of Islam, there would have been great confusion. Hence, only the faith which was perfect in every way and was meant for all mankind and was to last forever was given that name so that its very name might be illustrative of its underlying purpose. The name *Islam* is "the new name" referred to in Isa. 62:2.

When the Quran calls the former Prophets Muslims, it obviously does not mean that they followed Quranic teachings. It simply means that, as explained above, they followed the true faith of their day and manifested in themselves, though partly of course, the spirit of اسلام i.e. submission to the will of God.

#### 140. Important Words:

الله (God) is derived from الله (*alaha*) which means, he worshipped. So الله means, a thing or person or being

worshipped, whether true or false; a deity (Aqrah).

#### Commentary:

Jacob or Israel was the son of Isaac who was a son of Abraham. Thus Ishmael was the uncle of Jacob, and yet the children of Jacob here include Ishmael among their "fathers" which proves two things: *firstly*, that the word اب (father) is also used of uncle; and *secondly*, that up to the time of Jacob's sons, Ishmael was held in due respect by the Israelites. Nay, the children of Israel mention the name of Ishmael even before that of their own grandfather, Isaac, and do not mention any other son of Abraham.

The words, *were you present when death came to Jacob*, signify that the principle of submission to the will of God is not an innovation introduced by Islam, but has been recognized by good and righteous people in all times and even Israel, the founder of the Jewish tribes, acted upon that principle, so much so, that the only thought that came to his mind when death approached him was to enjoin the same noble principle upon his children. Israel wished his sons to become pious Muslims; will not the

135. <sup>a</sup>Those are a people that have passed away; for them is that which they earned, and for you shall be what you earn, and you shall not be questioned as to what they did.<sup>141</sup>

136. And they say, <sup>b</sup>‘Be ye Jews or Christians that you may be rightly guided.’ Say: ‘Nay, follow ye the religion of Abraham who was <sup>c</sup>ever inclined to God; he was not of those who set up gods with God.’<sup>142</sup>

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ  
وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا  
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا  
قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ  
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:142. <sup>b</sup>2:112. <sup>c</sup>3:68; 6:80; 16:124; 22:32.

Jews of the Holy Prophet's day act upon that principle?

In corroboration of what the Quran says about Jacob's will to his sons, Rodwell quotes the following from Midrash Rabbah: "At the time when our father Jacob quitted this world, he summoned his twelve sons and said to them, Hearken to your father Israel (Gen. 49:2). Have you any doubts in your hearts concerning the Holy One, blessed be He. They said, Hear, o Israel, our father, as there is no doubt in thy heart, so neither is there in ours. For the Lord is our God, and He is One" (Midr. Rabbah on Gen. par. 98, and on Deut. par. 2). Compare also Targ. Jer. on Deut. 6:4.

#### 141. Commentary:

The People of the Book are here warned that the fact that they are the descendants of God's Prophets would

not avail them in any way. Their forefathers reaped the rewards of their good deeds and won God's favours; and if they also wish to become His favourites, they must perform similar deeds and show implicit obedience to God and complete submission to His will. The fact that they are descended from holy persons makes them all the more responsible.

#### 142. Important Words:

حنيفاً (ever inclined to God) is derived from حنף which means, he became inclined. حنيف means: (1) one who turns away from error to guidance (Mufradāt); (2) one who steadily follows the right faith and never swerves from it; (3) one inclining in a perfect manner to Islam and continuing firm therein (Lane); (4) one who follows the religion of Abraham (Aqrah).



137. Say ye: <sup>a</sup>“We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and *his* children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to *all other* Prophets from their Lord. <sup>b</sup>We make no difference between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves’.<sup>143</sup>

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا  
أُنْزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ  
وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ  
وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ  
لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ  
لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:85. <sup>b</sup>2:286; 3:85; 4:153.

### Commentary:

There is a notion prevalent among the followers of different religions that salvation is confined to their respective folds only. This view is, however, quite erroneous. Salvation depends upon the grace and mercy of God, and submission to His will is the only way to win His grace and mercy. So long as the following of a religion involves submission to God's will, there is salvation in it. But when this condition ceases to exist in a religion, that religion can no more offer salvation. The verse points out that the Jews and the Christians are wrong in asserting that the bare entry of a person into their respective religions assures salvation. Not so, says Allah, but salvation lies in what Abraham taught—absolute submission to God's will. And Abraham was a rightly guided person who taught and practised the spirit of Islam.

The words, *he was not of those who*

*set up gods with God*, are not used here to remove any misconception about Abraham but to point out to the People of the Book that, while their progenitor Abraham was not an idol-worshipper, they had for themselves practically set up so many equals to God. They outwardly professed belief in God's Oneness but in their hearts lay hidden, scores of idols which they loved and revered as one should love and revere God alone.

### 143. Important Words:

سبط (children) is derived from سبط. They say سبط الشعر i.e. the hair was or became loose and hanging. سبط المطر means, the rain was copious and extensive. سبط signifies the idea of length and extensiveness. شعر سبط means, hair that is long and not curly. سبط الكفين means, a generous man, literally one possessing long and open hands, because his helping hand extends to every needy person. A grandson is also called سبط (sibt)

because his birth signifies increase of progeny. In a still wider sense, the word might signify progeny generally. The expression here refers to the twelve tribes of Israel named after the twelve sons of Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Gen. 35:23-26; 49:28).

### **Commentary:**

The verse is addressed to Muslims who are enjoined to reply to Jews and Christians by saying that the central point in religion is belief in, and submission to, God; and so everything that comes from God must be accepted and it is simply foolish to say that a people believing in some Prophets of God need not believe in others. All Messengers of God and all revelations coming from Him must be accepted and no distinction is to be made between this Prophet and that or between this revelation and that, so far as belief in them is concerned. One Prophet may be higher in status than another and one revelation may be more important than another; but all of them must be accepted without discrimination. The words, *to Him we submit ourselves*, have been used as an argument in support of the above assertion. When we submit to God, everything coming from Him must be accepted.

It indeed redounds to the great credit of Islam that it is the only religion which recognizes the Prophets of all countries and all nations, whereas other faiths limit

prophethood only to their own respective spheres. Naturally the Quran mentions only the names of those Prophets who were known to the Arabs to whom the message of Islam was first given; but it makes a general remark to the effect that, *there is no people to whom a warner has not been sent* (35:25).

As already pointed out, this verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran regards all Prophets to be equal in rank. In fact, the Quran clearly states that different Prophets possess different ranks, some of them being spiritually higher than others (2:254). The sentence, *We make no difference between any of them*, thus only means that a Muslim makes no distinction between the different Prophets in respect of their prophethood.

Some Christian critics have objected to the verse under comment and have demanded proof of the prophethood of Ishmael. But what proof is there, it may be asked, of the prophethood of Isaac? If the Bible testifies to the prophethood of Isaac, the Quran testifies to the prophethood of Ishmael. If the testimony of the Quran cannot be accepted as a proof for the prophethood of Ishmael, there is no earthly reason why the testimony of the Bible be accepted as a proof for Isaac's prophethood. And even the Bible is not without evidence of the fact that God made a number of promises to Abraham about the future greatness of Ishmael and his progeny (see note on 2:130).

138. And "if they believe as you have believed, then are they surely guided; but if they turn back, then they are only creating a schism, and Allah will surely suffice thee against them, for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.<sup>144</sup>

139. Say, 'We will adopt the religion of Allah; and who is better than Allah in *teaching* religion, and Him alone do we worship.'<sup>145</sup>

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا  
وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ  
فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ<sup>١٣٨</sup>

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ<sup>١٣٩</sup> وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً  
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عِيدُونَ<sup>١٤٠</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:21.

#### 144. Important Words:

شق (schism) is from شاق which is from شق meaning, he split up a thing, or he tore it up. شق عصا القوم means, he created a split or schism in the community which before stood united. شق النبات means, the vegetation sprouted forth from the earth. الشق means, one side as opposed to another. شاقه means, he opposed him and became hostile to him so that each sided with a different party. شقاق means, opposition.; hostility; schism; being mutually remote (Aqrah). The word شقاق however, is not used about the party which sides with the truth (Muḥīṭ).

#### Commentary:

Muslims are here told that if Jews and Christians come to agree with them in holding that religion is not an hereditary matter, but consists in accepting all revealed guidance, then

they are one with them; otherwise, their ways stand apart and a wide gulf separates them, responsibility for the schism and the resulting hostility in this case lying with Jews and Christians and not with the Muslims.

In this case, however, Muslims should not be afraid of Jews or Christians; for God is on their side and the God of Islam is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. If they pray to Him for protection, He will answer their prayers and even if there comes a time when they cannot pray, He will protect them; for He is not only All-Hearing but is also All-Knowing. The verse also refers to the special and personal divine protection promised to the Holy Prophet (5:68) in view of the repeated attempts made by the Jews upon his life.

#### 145. Important Words:

صبغة (religion) is derived from صبغ.

140. Say: 'Do you dispute with us concerning Allah, while He is our Lord and your Lord? And <sup>a</sup>for us are our works, and for you your works; and to Him alone we are sincerely devoted.'<sup>146</sup>

قُلْ أَتَحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا  
وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ  
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>28:56; 42:16; 109:7.

They say صبغه i.e. he dyed or coloured it. صبغ يده في الماء means, he immersed his hand in the water. صبغ يده بالعمل means, he laboured in work and became notable therein. اصطبغ بكذا means, he became dyed or coloured with it. صبغة means, dye or colour; kind or mode of a thing; religion; code of laws; baptism. صبغة الله means, God's religion; the nature with which God has endowed men (Aqrah). Religion is called صبغة because it covers a man like a dye or colour.

### Commentary:

In the verse the word صبغة (religion) is used as an object, the subject of which is understood. According to the rules of Arabic grammar, sometimes when it is intended strongly to induce a person to do a certain thing, the verb is omitted and only the object is mentioned. Therefore words like اخذوا (adopt) or اتبعوا (follow) will be taken to be understood before the words صبغة الله and the clause would mean, "adopt or follow the religion which God wishes you to adopt or follow". This indeed is the true baptism which can make one acquire God's attributes and become His living manifestation. Compare with it the Christian

baptism which seeks to procure for a man forgiveness of sins and everlasting life by the mere act of immersing him in water or sprinkling it on him at his christening ceremony.

### 146. Important Words:

مخلصون (sincerely devoted) is derived from خلص which means, he or it became pure. اخلص في الطاعة means, he was or became sincere in obedience. اخلص له الحب means, he was sincere in his love for him, lit. he made his love true for him (Aqrah). اخلص لله means, he was sincere to God or he was sincere in his connection with Him (Lane & Mufradāt)

### Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to the People of the Book that it is God Who has sent His revelation to him and that they should not dispute God's choice, because He is as much the God of the Muslims as He is theirs, and He knows the works of both. He is the Creator of all and His grace is not confined to any one tribe or country. So, if God has now selected an Ishmaelite for the office of prophethood and has chosen the Arabs for His grace, they should not

141. 'Do you say that <sup>a</sup>Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and *his* children were Jews or Christians?' Say, 'Do you know better or Allah?' And <sup>b</sup>who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do.<sup>147</sup>

142. <sup>c</sup>Those are a people that have passed away; for them is what they earned, and for you shall be what you earn; and you

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ  
وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا  
هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى ۖ قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ  
اللَّهُ ۚ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً  
عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا  
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

تِلْكَ أُمَمٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۖ لَهُمَا مَا كَسَبَتْ  
وَلَكُمْ مِمَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا

<sup>a</sup>3:85; 4:164. <sup>b</sup>2:284. <sup>c</sup>See 2:135.

reject him on that account. The central point of faith is the person of God, and if one is sincere in his connection with Him, there should be no hesitation in accepting anything that emanates from Him. The real question is, whether God has indeed chosen Muḥammad to be His Messenger. If that question is answered in the affirmative, nothing should stop a man from accepting Islam; and if he rejects Islam, he ranges himself against God, be he a Jew, a Christian, a Hindu or any other.

#### 147. Commentary:

In this verse Jews and Christians have been indirectly asked how Abraham and his children would fare, if salvation were monopolized by them. If they replied that these holy persons were also Jews or Christians, it would be against all the facts of history, because they belonged to pre-

Mosaic times when Jewish and Christian religions had not yet come into existence.

Some short-sighted persons attach so much importance to their own views that they begin to ascribe them to every righteous servant of God. In their discussions, Jews and Christians represented even those of their ancestors who lived before their religions came into existence as the followers of their own faiths.

This is the attitude not only of the ignorant masses, but even educated people sometimes fall a prey to this delusion. Many Christians of great learning hold the untenable belief that even those Prophets and other righteous people who lived before Jesus were saved through his alleged death on the cross. Such men should beware of God's judgement, as He is not unaware of their deeds.

shall not be questioned as to what they did.<sup>148</sup>

ع  
١٦

كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

**R. 17.**

143. The foolish among the people will say: ‘What has turned them away from their Qiblah which they followed?’ Say: ‘To Allah belong the East and the West. He guides whom He pleases to the right path’.<sup>149</sup>

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهُمْ <sup>ع</sup> ١٧

عَنْ قِبَلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ لِلَّهِ

الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى

صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:116.

**148. Commentary:**

Jews and Christians are once more warned against relying upon those of their forefathers who won the pleasure of God by their good deeds. It is their own deeds and not those of others that will save them. Their own good actions alone can bring them salvation and not the fact that they are the descendants or followers of Abraham, Jacob, Moses or Jesus. *No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another*, says the Quran (6:165).

**149. Important Words:**

قِبَلَتِهِمْ (their *Qiblah*). The word قِبَلَة is derived from قَبَلَ. They say قَبَلَ عَلَى الشَّيْءِ i.e. he began the thing and stuck to it. قَبَلَ الْمَكَانَ means, he came facing the house. أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ means, he advanced facing him. أَقْبَلَ فَلَانَا الشَّيْءَ means, he put the thing before such a one or in front of him. قِبَلَة means: (1) direction.; (2) direction to which a man turns while praying; (3) anything which one faces; (4) the Ka‘bah at Mecca to which Muslims turn their faces when praying (Aqrah).

**Commentary:**

In the preceding verses the Quran spoke of the people that have gone before, at the same time hinting at the difference between their deeds and those of the Muslims. In the present verse it introduces a subject in which the Muslims differ from other People of the Book, i.e. the subject of قِبَلَة (*Qiblah*).

It is a usual practice with the Quran that it does not abruptly give any new commandment such as might appear hard to men. It generally begins by preparing the ground for the acceptance of such commandment by giving arguments in its favour and answering some objections that might possibly arise against it. See also 2:184, 185.

Similar is the case here. As the commandment regarding the change of *Qiblah* was likely to prove a stumbling block for some people, so the ground is prepared by making a general observation to the effect that the selection of a particular direction does not really matter. What matters

144. And thus have <sup>a</sup>We made you an exalted nation, <sup>b</sup>that you may be guardians over men, and the Messenger of God may be a guardian over you. And We did not appoint the Qiblah which thou didst follow, except that We might know him who follows the Messenger of God from him who turns upon his heels. And this is indeed hard, except for those whom Allah has guided. And it does not behove Allah to let your faith go in vain; surely, Allah is Compassionate and Merciful to the people.<sup>150</sup>

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا  
شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ  
عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي  
كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ  
الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ ۖ وَإِنْ  
كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۖ  
وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:111. <sup>b</sup>22:79.

is the spirit of obedience to God on the one hand and unity among the Faithful on the other. The clause, *To Allah belong the East and the West*, signifies that the selection of the East or the West is not of much importance, the real object being God only. The selection of a particular direction is primarily meant for the purpose of unity among the Faithful. But the direction must also be good, and God was now going to choose a good direction for the Muslims and the objections of the people would prove their own folly.

### 150. Important Words:

وسط (exalted) is derived from وسط meaning, he stood in between two things. (wasata) or وسط في حسبه

(wasata) means, he was or became good and noble. الوسط means: (1) occupying the middle position or taking the middle course; (2) good and exalted in rank (Aqrah). That the word وسط is used here in the sense of good and exalted, is clear from 3:111 where Muslims are called the best people.

لنعلم (that We might know) signifies that We may make known or distinguish. In fact, God being Omniscient knows all things; so He does not stand in need of knowing a thing because everything is already known to Him. The word has been used elsewhere also in this sense (33:51). The expression من (from him who) occurring after it also shows

that the word is used here in the sense of distinguishing or making known to the people.

### **Commentary:**

The clause, *and thus have We made you an exalted nation*, refers to, and is connected with, the concluding clause of the preceding verse, i.e. *He guides whom He pleases to the right path*. God means to say that whatever guidance He sends down to the Muslims is for their own good and it is through His guidance that they have been made an exalted nation. So in the matter of the *Qiblah*, too, they should be prepared to accept His guidance which is meant for their own good. This will make them "guardians over men" and the Messenger of God a "guardian over the Muslims".

Muslims are told that, as decreed by God, they are to become the leaders of men and win the pleasure of God by their good deeds and that on that account they will naturally become recipients of God's special favours, with the result that other people will be forced to the conclusion that the religion which they follow is the true religion. In this way will Muslims bear witness to the truth of Islam, just as the Holy Prophet was a witness of its truth for them.

Another meaning of the clause, *that you may be guardians over men*, is that each generation of Muslims should guard and watch over the next generation. Being the best of people, it is incumbent upon them to be always on their guard against falling away from the high standard of life

expected of them, and to see that each succeeding generation also follows the path pursued by those who enjoyed the ennobling company of the Holy Prophet. Thus the Holy Prophet was to be a guardian over his immediate followers, while they in turn were to be guardians over their successors, and so on.

Taking the particle *على* (over) in the clause under discussion to mean "against" and the word *شهيد* (guardian) to mean "witness", which it often does, the clause would mean "that you may be witnesses against men and the Holy Prophet may be a witness against you"; i.e., the Holy Prophet would serve as a mirror for the Muslims by looking into which they would be able to see their own shortcomings, while the lives of true Muslims would serve as a model for other people who, by comparing their lives with those of true Muslims, would see and realize their own defects and correct them accordingly. This state of affairs could be brought about only if Muslims faithfully followed all the behests of God including the one regarding *Qiblah*, which was important as a rallying-point for the new community.

It may be noted here that, as hinted in the words, *and We did not appoint the Qiblah which thou didst follow*, the Holy Prophet had adopted the Temple at Jerusalem as his *Qiblah* by God's command; but as it was meant by God to be only a temporary *Qiblah*, and was to be subsequently replaced by the Ka'bah which was to be the Islamic *Qiblah* for all time, the



145. Verily, We see thee turning thy face often to heaven; surely, then, will We make thee turn to the Qiblah which thou likest.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ  
فَلْنُؤَيِّنَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ

command with regard to the temporary *Qiblah* was not included in the Quran. This shows that all such commandments as possessed temporary application were not included in the Quran; only those were included which were of a permanent nature. Hence the theory that the Quran contains some verses that now stand abrogated is quite unfounded.

The Arabs were greatly attached to the Ka'bah, the ancient house of worship at Mecca. It was their national Temple which had come down to them from the days of Abraham. It, therefore, proved a severe trial for them when they were asked at the very inception of Islam at Mecca to abandon the Ka'bah in favour of the Temple at Jerusalem which was the *Qiblah* of the People of the Book. And later on at Medina, the change of the *Qiblah* from the Temple at Jerusalem to the Ka'bah proved a great trial for both Jews and Christians. It was very hard for them to abandon their *Qiblah* for a rival temple which had been held sacred by the pagan Arabs. Thus God provided a trial for both the People of the Book and the idolaters of Mecca.

The Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem was not adopted as *Qiblah* by the Holy Prophet to conciliate the Jewish population of Medina, as is wrongly supposed by Sale and other

Christian critics, because it was not at Medina that this Temple was adopted as the *Qiblah*. It had already been the *Qiblah* of the Muslims at Mecca where there was no Jewish or Christian population to placate (Bukhārī & Jarīr). If, by appointing a *Qiblah*, the Holy Prophet had intended to win over a people, the natural course would have been to appoint the Ka'bah as a *Qiblah* while at Mecca and turn round to the Temple of Jerusalem while at Medina. But what actually happened was quite the reverse. Moreover, the Quran expressly says that the adoption of neither of the *Qiblahs* was meant to win over any people to Islam, but was intended only as a trial to distinguish the true believers from those not true.

The words *it does not behove Allah to let your faith go in vain* have a twofold meaning: (1) that this change of *Qiblah* is in no way calculated adversely to affect the faith of Muslims but would actually strengthen it; (2) that if Muslims were not directed to turn to the Ka'bah, they would not inherit the blessings resulting from the prayers of Abraham offered at the time of its building (2:130). It was impossible that the Companions of the Holy Prophet who had displayed such steadfast loyalty and devotion to their noble ideals, should not have been made heirs to the blessings contained

"So, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it. And they to whom the Book has been given know that this is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not unmindful of what they do.<sup>151</sup>

شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ط وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ  
فَوُتُّوا وَجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ط وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ  
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ  
رَبِّهِمْ ط وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:150, 151.

in Abraham's prayers with which the Promised Prophet was to be so closely associated. The faith of Muslims would, as it were, go in vain if they remained detached from the Ka'bah and did not inherit its blessings.

### 151. Important Words:

قد (verily) means, already; sometimes; often; verily, etc. (Lane).

قلب (turning) is derived from قلب. They say قلب الشيء i.e. (1) he made the thing change direction; (2) he turned it about so that its face and back changed directions; (3) he turned it upside down; (4) he turned it inside out; (5) he changed its condition. The word قلب (*qallaba*) gives almost the same meaning but with greater intensification. قلب الشيء means, the thing turned over and over, doing so much and repeatedly (Aqrab). The expression قلب وجهك would therefore mean, turning thy face with eagerness and anxiety to receive an order.

فلنولينك (We will make thee turn) is derived from ولي (*wallā*) which again is derived from ولي (*waliya*). The expression ولاه gives two distinct meanings: (1) he made him ruler or

master or guardian of it; (2) he made it change direction or he made it turn towards a thing or away from it as the case may be (Aqrab).

الحرام (Sacred) is derived from حرم which means, it was or became forbidden, prohibited or unlawful whether from sanctity or owing to its being injurious. حرمه الشيء means, he denied or refused him the thing. Thus

حرام means: (1) forbidden and unlawful; (2) sacred and inviolable (Aqrab). المسجد الحرام signifies, the Sacred Mosque at Mecca, i.e. the Ka'bah.

### Commentary:

While at Mecca, the Holy Prophet had orders to turn his face in Prayers towards the sacred Temple at Jerusalem. The Prophet, of course, obeyed the divine behest; but, as in his heart of hearts he desired the Ka'bah to be his *Qiblah* and had a sort of intuition that eventually he would be ordered to turn his face towards it, he generally tried to choose such a place for worship where he could keep both the sacred Temple at Jerusalem and the Sacred Mosque of Mecca before him. When,

however, the Holy Prophet migrated to Medina, it became impossible for him to turn his face to both the places at one and the same time, and in compliance with divine command he was forced to turn his face to the Temple at Jerusalem alone. With this change the inner desire of the Holy Prophet naturally became intensified, and though, out of deference to God's command, he did not actually pray for the change, yet he anxiously and eagerly looked towards heaven for an order to that effect. The clause, *verily We see thee turning thy face often to heaven*, is therefore highly eulogistic of the Prophet, inasmuch as it indicates (1) that the Holy Prophet had such great insight into spiritual matters that in spite of the interim command from God he knew that sooner or later the order for turning the face towards the Ka'bah would come; (2) that despite his great desire that the Ka'bah should be appointed as *Qiblah*, the Holy Prophet had such extraordinary respect for his Lord's command that he refrained from even praying to that effect; (3) that God the Almighty had such great love for His Messenger that He most graciously refers to his turning his face towards heaven and expedites the command about the change of *Qiblah*, lovingly adding, *We will make thee turn to the Qiblah which thou likest*; and (4) that God had such great regard for the wish of the Prophet that He not only ordered him to turn his face towards the *Qiblah* of his liking but at the same time hinted that He would soon make him master and guardian of it;

for, as explained under Important Words, the expression نولينك also means, "We will make thee master or guardian". Truly did 'Ā'ishah say to her illustrious husband, "I see that God hastens to fulfil your wishes" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*).

After the above introduction follows the commandment about the change of *Qiblah* in the words, *So turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it*. This commandment was given after the Holy Prophet had migrated to Medina and had stayed there for about sixteen months. The words "Sacred Mosque" do not merely stand for the Ka'bah but also provide an argument in favour of the change ordered. The Mosque was sacred and full of blessings and would prove a sanctuary for the faithful. The words, *wherever you be, turn your faces towards it*, have been added with a threefold purpose: (1) to make it clear that the order was not meant for the people of Medina only but for all Muslims wherever they might be; (2) to point to the fact that one of the reasons underlying the order relating to the *Qiblah* was to bring about unity and uniformity among all Muslims, wherever they might be; and (3) to hint that the commandment did not apply to the Holy Prophet only but extended to all Muslims, for whereas, in the preceding clause the Quran says, *turn thy face*, in the clause under comment it says, *turn your faces*.

The words, *They to whom the Book has been given know that this is the*

146. And even if thou shouldst bring every Sign to those who have been given the Book, <sup>a</sup>they would never follow thy Qiblah; nor wouldst thou follow their Qiblah; nor would some of them follow the Qiblah of others. <sup>b</sup>And if thou shouldst follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, then thou shalt surely be of the transgressors. <sup>152</sup>

وَلَئِنْ آتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ  
آيَةٍ مَا تَتَّبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ  
قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ  
وَلَئِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا  
جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَمِنَ  
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>109:3, 7. <sup>b</sup>6:57; 13:38.

*truth from their Lord*, mean that Jews and Christians were convinced on the basis of prophecies found in their Scriptures having special reference to the Ka‘bah and the Holy Prophet (Isa. 45:13, 14; John 4:21; Deut. 33:2; Gen. 21:21), that the commandment about the change of the *Qiblah* from the Temple at Jerusalem to the Ka‘bah at Mecca was truly from God. Mecca lies in what is known as the Desert of Faran or Paran mentioned in some of the above-mentioned verses of the Bible, and therefore the Jews knew that the prophecies contained in them applied to the Ka‘bah and the Holy Prophet.

It may be noted here that, though in ordinary circumstances, the Muslims are enjoined to turn their faces to the Ka‘bah when saying their prayers, yet as direction is of secondary importance, Islam ordains that, if in special circumstances, it becomes difficult for a man to turn his face to the Ka‘bah or to keep it so turned, he

can say his Prayers in any direction that may be convenient. For instance, when a man does not know in which direction the Ka‘bah lies, while travelling at night in a Railway train or on the back of an animal, etc., he can pray facing any direction. Similarly, a sick man lying in bed may pray in a lying posture facing any direction that he may find convenient.

### 152. Commentary:

This verse points to the hostility of Jews and Christians not only to Islam but also to one another. The Jews had Jerusalem as their *Qiblah* (See I. Kings 8:22-30; Dan. 6:10; Ps. 5:7; Jonah, 2:4) while the Samaritans, a disowned section of the Jews, who also followed the Mosaic Law, had adopted a certain mountain in Palestine, named Gerizim, as their *Qiblah* (John, 4:20 and Commentary on the New Testament by Right Rev. W. Walsham How, D.D., published by Society for Promoting Christian

147. <sup>a</sup>Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it even as they recognize their sons, but surely some of them <sup>b</sup>conceal the truth knowingly. 153

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا  
يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ  
لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>6:21. <sup>b</sup>2:175; 5:16; 6:92.

Knowledge, London, under this verse). As regards the early Christians, they followed the *Qiblah* of the Jews (Acts 3:1; Enc. Brit., 14th edition, v. 676; Jew. Enc. vi. 53) but we learn from authentic sources that when a party of the Christians of Najrān paid a visit to Medina to have a discussion with the Holy Prophet on some doctrinal point, they worshipped in the Holy Prophet's mosque at Medina with their faces turned to the East (Zurqānī, iv. 41). Thus the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Christians followed different *Qiblahs* owing to their mutual jealousy and enmity. In these circumstances it was vain to expect them to follow the *Qiblah* of the Muslims, and when obsolete faiths refused to follow the true *Qiblah*, how could a true believer follow a *Qiblah* that had become obsolete.

The concluding clause speaks of the practice of the People of the Book as vain "desires," not because they were not originally based on revelation but because they were opposed to the new revelation that had appointed the Ka'bah as *Qiblah*. He who insists on sticking to an order that is no longer in force, really follows naught but his own desire.

The words, *then thou shalt surely be of the transgressors*, do not

evidently refer to the Holy Prophet, because, (1) he could in no circumstances go against Allah's commandment, and (2) the foregoing part of this very verse says about him, *nor wouldst thou follow their Qiblah*, and (3) it is clearly stated in the preceding verse that he loved to turn his face towards the Ka'bah and eagerly awaited a divine commandment to that effect. It is, therefore, unthinkable that the Prophet could forsake the *Qiblah* of his own liking. The words obviously refer, as supported by the rules of the Arabic language as well as the usage of the Quran, either to the reader in general or to every individual Muslim who followed the Holy Prophet.

### 153. Important Words:

يعرفون (recognise) is derived from عرِفَ which means, he knew or recognized or perceived a thing. Though the word is also used of such knowledge as is derived through the senses, it is particularly used of such knowledge as is obtained by thinking and meditating (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The pronoun *hū* (him or it) occurring in the clause "recognise him or it" may be taken as referring either to the change of *Qiblah* or to the Holy Prophet. The clause means

148. <sup>a</sup>It is the truth from thy Lord; be not therefore of those who doubt.<sup>154</sup>

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ  
الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

**R. 18.**

149. And every one has a goal which dominates him; <sup>b</sup>vie, then, with one another in good works. Wherever you be, Allah will bring you all together. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.<sup>155</sup>

وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيُّهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا  
الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ آيُنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ  
اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٤٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:61; 6:115; 10:95. <sup>b</sup>3:134; 5:49; 35:33; 57:22.

that the People of the Book know, on the basis of the prophecies found in their Scriptures, that a Prophet would appear among the Arabs and that he would be connected with the Ka'bah.

The sentence, *some of them conceal the truth knowingly*, refers to the learned men of the Jews who were well versed in their scriptures and knew the prophecies relating to the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam but deliberately suppressed those prophecies in order to conceal them from the people.

**154. Important Words:**

الحق (truth) means: (1) a truth; (2) a thing foreordained by God; (3) an established fact (4) a right; (5) certainty and conviction (Aqrab).

الممترين (those in doubt) is the plural of الممتري which is derived from امترى which again is derived from مرى. They say مرى حقه i.e. he contested or refused his right. امترى means: (1) he doubted; (2) he contested or raised objections. Thus ممترين means: (1) those who doubt; (2) those who contest and raise

objections (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

This verse refers to the great future of Islam. The revelation sent down to the Holy Prophet had come to stay and all obstacles that stood in its way were doomed to disappear. This is ordained by God, the Controller of man's destiny, and is as good as an established fact. Therefore, O reader, do not waste your energies in doubting or disputing a thing that must prevail.

**155. Important Words:**

وجهة (goal) is derived from وجه meaning, the face. وجهة therefore, means: (1) a direction to which one turns one's face; (2) a goal or an object (Aqrab).

استبقوا (vie with one another) is formed from استبق which is derived from سبق which means, he went ahead of him and left him behind; he outstripped him; he excelled him in some quality. استبق means: (1) he tried to go ahead of others so as to reach the goal first; (2) he hastened and

employed his full powers to attain or reach an object (Aqrab & Lane).

خيرات (good works) is the plural of خيرة which means (1) anything excessively good; (2) anything superior to other things (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This short verse contains, in a few words, a mighty lesson as to how the Muslims can achieve success in life. First, they should fix for themselves a goal and that goal should not be the attainment of a particular good but of every good. Nay, they should aspire for more than that. They should try to attain such things as are exceedingly good and superior to others. Again, they should not seek these things in a careless and haphazard manner but should hasten towards them, vying with one another in a spirit of healthy emulation to reach the goal before others.

The expression استبقوا (vie with one another) used here in the plural form also points to the fact that in this race for all that is good, Muslims should try to help those who are weak and assist them in the attainment of virtue. A true Muslim should not only himself strive after virtue but should also invite others to attain to the same stage of virtue which he himself has attained. The spiritual race referred to in the verse thus becomes a most peculiar race in which the competitors not only vie with one another but also look towards their comrades and help such of them as may stumble on their way or be lax in other respects.

The clause, *Wherever you be, Allah will bring you all together*, means

that a Muslim should not think of vying with only those who immediately surround him and thus be satisfied by outstripping them, but should also remember the fact that in far-off places there may be those who are running very fast—faster than those who surround him—and as God will judge all together, a Muslim should not be unmindful of the unknown competitors but should try to spend his energies to the fullest possible extent so that he may truly top the list.

The clause is capable of yet another interpretation. It is human nature that when a man comes to know that the result of his works would be announced publicly, he strives all the harder to outdo others in the discharge of his duties. Hence, God calls upon Muslims to bear in mind that on a certain day they will be gathered together with the peoples of all ages and the results of their deeds will be announced before that huge assemblage; so they should exert themselves accordingly.

The clause, *Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, is intended to remind Muslims that there is no limit to man's spiritual progress and development. A man can rise to any stage of progress and yet the All-Powerful God can help and guide him to the attainment of a still higher stage.

The words هو موليا (which dominates him) literally mean, which he makes dominant over him, i.e. a man first sets up an objective and then makes it a dominating factor in his life. The expression هو موليا also means, to

150. And from wheresoever thou comest forth, <sup>a</sup>turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; for that is indeed the truth from thy Lord. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.<sup>156</sup>

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ<sup>ط</sup>  
وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

151. And <sup>b</sup>from wheresoever thou comest forth, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it that people may

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ<sup>ط</sup> وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ<sup>ل</sup> لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:145. <sup>b</sup>2:145, 150.

which he turns his face. In both these senses the underlying idea is that of engrossment and devotion.

### 156. Important Words:

خرج (thou comest forth) is from خرج which means: (1) he came forth; (2) he went forth; (3) he came forth or went forth for a battle (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

Now when the Ka'bah had been appointed the *Qiblah* of Muslims, it became necessary that Mecca should come under their control. The verse under comment suitably refers to that matter. Muslims are bidden henceforward to direct all their energies to the conquest of Mecca. In all his campaigns, the Holy Prophet was commanded to keep in view the taking of Mecca, which had now become the centre of Islam. This is borne out by the expression خرج (thou comest forth) which also means "thou goest forth for a battle". The word خرج "thou comest forth or goest forth" has thus nothing to do with the turning of the face to the

Ka'bah, at the time of Prayers; for Prayers are not performed walking. Obviously the commandment cannot mean that one should, while walking, pray with one's face turned toward the Ka'bah.

The words, *for that is indeed the truth from thy Lord*, evidently imply that Mecca was sure to fall one day into the hands of the Holy Prophet. As considering the then helpless condition of the Muslims, such an achievement appeared to be almost impossible, so God gave His Messenger the assurance that the promise was a true one and its fulfilment was absolutely certain.

The expression, *and Allah is not unmindful of what you do*, provides a reason for the above promise. God was well aware of the deeds of the Muslims, knowing full well how they were striving to win His favour; so He could not let their labours go unrewarded. Just as He had established their connection with the Ka'bah spiritually, so would He make them its masters physically.



have no argument against you, except those who are unjust—<sup>a</sup>so fear them not, but fear Me—and <sup>b</sup>that I may perfect My favour upon you; and that you may be rightly guided.<sup>157</sup>

عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا  
مِنْهُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي ۚ  
وَلَا تَمْنَعِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:4. <sup>b</sup>5:4; 12:7.

### 157. Commentary:

The singular person in *خرجت* (thou comest forth) is used to emphasize the fact that the conquest of Mecca was the personal responsibility of the Holy Prophet. If he could persuade others to help him, well and good; if not, he alone stood responsible before God—a mighty responsibility indeed which also strikes at the very root of the objection that Islam waited for a declaration of the defensive war till it was strong enough to hit back.

The plural person in *حيث ما كنتم* (wherever you be) is used so as to include the Muslims of all places. Next to the Holy Prophet, they are also commanded to keep the same object in view, i.e. the conquest of Mecca. This verse and the preceding one should afford no ground for inferring that Islam bids its followers to wage an aggressive war. For, as amply borne out by history, by the time these verses were revealed, war had already commenced with the Meccans and it was they that had forced it upon the unwilling Muslims.

The words, *that people may have no argument against you*, mean that if the Muslims failed to conquer Mecca, the objection would quite legitimately

be raised by the enemies of Islam, that the Holy Prophet had not fulfilled the prayer of Abraham, contained in 2:130, and therefore, could not claim to be the Promised Prophet. Moreover, the House to which the Muslims were commanded to turn their faces during Prayers was, while under the control of the heathen Meccans, full of idols. If the idols had continued to remain in the Ka'bah, the Muslims might have been accused of worshipping idols. This objection could be effectively answered, if the Holy House, which had been originally dedicated to the worship of One God, had been cleared of idols. Hence the commandment to substitute the Ka'bah for the Temple at Jerusalem as *Qiblah* was naturally followed by the injunction about the conquest of Mecca.

It may be added here that the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims had also been predicted in the Quran in 28:86, and 17:81. The prophecy contained in Deut. 33:2 was also fulfilled when the Holy Prophet entered Mecca as a conqueror at the head of ten thousand Muslims.

The clause, *that I may perfect My favour upon you*, provides yet another

152. Even as "We have sent to you a Messenger from among yourselves who recites Our Signs to you, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا  
عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ  
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:130.

argument in favour of the commandment relating to the conquest of Mecca. God means to say that, with the taking of Mecca, God's favour on the Muslims would begin to be perfected; for it would mean the subjugation of all Arabia and the influx of thousands of men into the fold of Islam. The result amply justified the prophecy; for the conquest of Mecca was rapidly followed by the conversion to Islam of thousands of Arabs. Most of the Arabs, at heart victims of the beauty of Islam, had deferred their acceptance of the new faith till the issue of the struggle between Muslims and Meccans had been finally settled, and now they virtually came forward in "troops" to join it.

Another reason why the conquest of Mecca was followed by a general influx of Arabs into Islam was that although the Arabs followed no revealed Book, yet the prophecy of Abraham that Mecca would not be conquered by the followers of any false Prophet, and any people attempting it would meet with destruction was well known to them. They had only recently seen a remarkable illustration of the fulfilment of this prophecy in the miraculous destruction of the Abyssinian invader Abraha and his

powerful army. Thus when Mecca fell into the hands of the Holy Prophet, they were at once convinced of his truth and thousands of them hastened to embrace Islam.

In this and the preceding verses (vv. 145 and 150), the command to turn to the Ka'bah has been mentioned thrice. This is not a repetition; for the first command, i.e. in v. 145, pertains to the change of the *Qiblah*, while the second and the third, i.e. in vv. 150 and 151, refer to the conquest of Mecca. But here, too, there is truly speaking no repetition, for the command about the conquest of Mecca contained in each of these two verses serves a different purpose. In v. 150 Muslims are asked to turn their attention to the conquest of Mecca because God wished them to do so. So they were duty bound to carry it out undeterred by any fear of failure; whereas in the verse under comment, i.e. v. 151, the benefits which were to accrue to Muslims on their carrying out the command relating to the conquest of Mecca have been mentioned. Those benefits briefly are: (1) refutation of the objections and criticism of the enemy; (2) conversion to Islam of hundreds of thousands of Arabs, including the kith and kin of the Muslims; and (3) enlargement of the political power of Islam.

Wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know.<sup>158</sup>

153. Therefore "remember Me, I will remember you; and be thankful to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me.<sup>159</sup>

مَالِكِ  
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

عِ  
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

فَاذْكُرُونِي اَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي

وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:204; 8:46; 62:11.

### 158. Commentary:

The word كما meaning "even as" has been used to connect this verse with the preceding one by pointing out that God will bestow upon the believers the favours mentioned in the preceding verse even as, or just as, He has favoured them with a Prophet.

With a slight change in the arrangement of the words this verse refers to the work of the Holy Prophet in exactly the same words in which Abraham prayed to God about the appearance of a Prophet among the Meccans (2:130), which clearly shows that Abraham's prayer had found fulfilment in the person of the Holy Prophet. The change in arrangement is that, while recounting the favours of God, this verse, unlike verse 2:130, mentions the work of purification before that of the teaching of the Book and Wisdom, because though in theory the teaching of the Book may come first, in actual practice purification is more important than the teaching of the Book and Wisdom; for whereas the former is the end, the latter is simply the means to that end.

Another difference between this verse and 2:130 is that whereas the latter ends with the words, *Thou art*

*the Mighty, the Wise*, the former concludes with the words, *And (he) teaches you that which you did not know*. The reason for this change is not far to seek. Abraham had used the words, *Surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise*, in his prayer, meaning that God being Mighty, it was not difficult for Him to accept his prayer; and as He was also Wise, He knew best what the requirements of his posterity would be. But when God spoke of the actual fulfilment of this prayer, it was quite unnecessary to repeat these words. So in place of the above-quoted words, the words, *(he) teaches you that which you did not know*, have been added to signify: *firstly*, that, while accepting the prayer God had granted even more than Abraham had prayed for; and *secondly*, that the teachings of the Holy Prophet were far in advance of the teachings of the former Prophets and were such as the world really needed but had not so far known.

### 159. Important Words:

فاذكروني اذكركم (so remember Me, I will remember you). The verb ذكره means, he remembered him; he bore it or him in mind; he spoke or talked of him. ذكر الله means, he remembered God; he glorified God and extolled His

**R. 19.**

154. O ye who believe, "seek help with patience and Prayer; surely, Allah is with the steadfast.<sup>160</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ  
وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:46.

greatness; he prayed to Him or offered prayers to Him. ذكره الله means, God bestowed His favours on him; He called him to His presence to do him honour. The noun ذكر means, remembrance; mentioning or speaking of; eminence; honour; good name (Aqrab, Mufradât & Lane).

اشكروا (render thanks) is from شكر i.e. he thanked; he was grateful. شكر الله means, he acknowledged the beneficence of God, rendering Him obedience and abstaining from disobedience (Lane).

**Commentary:**

Remembrance of God on the part of man means, to remember Him with love and devotion, to carry out His behests, to bear in mind His attributes, to glorify Him and offer prayers to Him; and remembrance of man on the part of God signifies, God's drawing him near to Himself, bestowing favours on him and making provision for his welfare. Thus we are here told that if we seek nearness to God, He will certainly draw us near to Himself. According to yet another meaning of the word ذكر i.e. honour and eminence, the verse would mean that if the Muslims will remember God, He will make them honoured and eminent in the world.

The expression, *remember Me, I*

*will remember you*, can also mean that one who truly loves God will eventually attract the love of God. Remembrance is really born of love and is in a way synonymous with it. Indeed, nobody can remember an object more than a lover does the object of his love.

**160. Important Words:**

صبر (patience) means: (1) to be steadfast and constant in something; (2) to endure afflictions with fortitude and without complaint or murmur; (3) to hold fast to the divine law and the dictates of reason; (4) to refrain from doing what the divine law and reason forbid (Mufradât).

**Commentary:**

The verse contains a golden principle of success. *Firstly*, a man should be constant in his endeavours, never relaxing his efforts and never losing heart, at the same time avoiding what is harmful and sticking fast to all that is good. *Secondly*, he should pray to God for success; for He alone is the source of all good.

The word صبر (patience) precedes the word صلاة (prayer) in the verse to emphasize the importance of observing the laws of God which are sometimes flouted in ignorance. Ordinarily, a prayer can be effective only when it is accompanied by the

155. And <sup>a</sup>say not of those who are killed in the cause of Allah that they are dead; nay, they are living; only you perceive not. **161**

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا  
تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:170.

use of all the necessary means created by God for the attainment of an object. This fact, however, does not minimize the importance of prayer, nor does it impose any limit on the omnipotence of God. If God so wills it, prayer can work wonders even where all earthly means fail.

Islam does not teach utter and blind dependence on material means. Prayer indeed is the essence of Islam. Man is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, and if he does not seek divine guidance and assistance, he can neither see all good nor can he secure it for himself.

As explained under Important Words, the word صبر also signifies, enduring afflictions with fortitude and without complaint and murmur. In this sense the verse would mean that, the present being the time of war and bloodshed, Muslims should bear these hardships with perfect patience and fortitude and that if they did so, God would succour them in their trails.

The concluding portion of the verse, i.e. *Allah is with the steadfast*, seems to confine itself to صبر only, excluding the element of صلاة. But it is not so really, for صبر in its wider sense includes prayer also. What is meant is that Allah is with those who are steadfast in their endeavours and are steadfast in their prayers. The principle

provides a wonderful key to success.

### 161. Important Words:

احياء (living) is the plural of حي which, among other things, means: (1) one whose life work does not go in vain; (2) one whose death is avenged. A well-known pre-Islamic poet, Hārith ibn Ḥillizah, author of the seventh *Mu‘allaqah*, says:

i.e. إن نبشتم ما بين ملحاة فالصا قب فيها الاموات والاحياء  
If you dig the graves between *Milḥah* and *Ṣāqib*, you will find some who are dead, and others who are living. In this couplet by the "living", the poet means such persons as were slain in battle but whose blood was avenged, and by the "dead" he means those whose blood was not avenged.

### Commentary:

The teaching about صبر (steadfastness) naturally brings in the question of sacrifices that Muslims were making in the cause of Islam. Therefore the Quran suitably refers here to the subject of martyrdom. Death is not the end of life, and in this respect believers and unbelievers stand on the same footing and the martyrs too enjoy no distinction. Nor would it be wrong to speak of them as dead in the ordinary sense of the word. But the word احياء (living) has been used here about martyrs in a special sense.

As explained under Important

156. And <sup>a</sup>We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient.<sup>162</sup>

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ  
وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ  
وَالشَّمْرِ ۖ وَبَشِيرٍ لِّلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

“3:187.

Words above, the word حَيٌّ (living) is also applied to him whose work, or, more properly speaking, the cause for which he lays down his life, does not come to an end with his death. The verse, therefore, points out that those who lay down their lives for Islam should not be regarded as dead, because the cause for which they give their lives still stands and is all the more strongly upheld by others who take their places.

Again, according to the Arabic idiom, حَيٌّ (living) is also one whose blood is avenged. The verse, therefore, implies that as full satisfaction is taken for the blood of Muslims killed in the way of God, not only in the sense that far more non-Muslims join the fold of Islam than those killed in the wars but also in the sense that the number of non-Muslims killed is much larger than those killed among the Muslims, therefore Muslim martyrs are not really dead.

The word حَيٌّ (living) may possess yet another significance. As a rule, life after death does not fully begin immediately after death. The soul of man continues in a state of torpor for sometime after death. This period varies with different persons according to the degree of their spiritual purity. As martyrs sacrifice their lives for the sake of God, their

souls do not remain long in torpor but are quickly revived into a new life. This is one of the reasons why martyrs are called living, not dead.

The verse comprises a great psychological truth which is calculated to exercise immense influence on the life and progress of a people. A community that does not duly honour those of its members who lay down their lives for the cause for which the community stands, sows the seed of its own ruin. Again, a community which does not arrange to remove the fear of death from the hearts of its members, seals its own fate. The verse under comment provides an effective safeguard against both these dangers.

### 162. Important Words:

لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ (and We will try you). لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ is derived from بَلَاءٌ which has two meanings: (1) learning the state or condition of a person by means of a trial or test whether through favours or afflictions; (2) manifesting the goodness or badness of an object by a similar means. اِبْتِلَاءٌ also means, a trial or a test imposed on a person with a view to learning or manifesting his true condition (Aqrab & Lane). See also 2:50.

### Commentary:

This verse comes as a fitting sequel to the preceding one. Muslims should

157. Who, <sup>a</sup>when a misfortune overtakes them, say, <sup>b</sup>‘Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.’<sup>163</sup>

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا  
إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>22:36. <sup>b</sup>7:126; 26:51.

be prepared not only to lay down their lives in the cause of Islam but also to suffer diverse forms of affliction which will be imposed on them as a trial. According to the Quran, God has generally two purposes in "proving" men. He "proves" or tries those who have attained to a high stage of spiritual advancement, as was the case with Abraham (2:125); and He also tries those who have not yet attained to that stage (29:3). His object in "proving" the former is to bring them to the notice of the people and make them shine as models of virtue and purity; while in the case of the latter, the purpose is to make them acquainted with their own weaknesses so that they may try to improve their condition. Though misfortunes and afflictions involve a certain amount of pain, they also afford a good opportunity for spiritual reformation and purification. Thus afflictions and calamities have their use. They serve to strengthen the faith. Those who remain steadfast under trials, despite afflictions, become entitled to a great reward from God. A trial also sometimes becomes a means of exposing the weakness of a person and of his downfall; for after all it is an examination which, though held with the object of promoting a student, sometimes results in his failure. See 7:177.

The tests by means of which God

intended to "prove" the faithful are, as stated in this verse: (1) Fear, i.e. a state or condition in which fear will dominate them, the enemy surrounding them with diverse dangers. (2) Hunger, i.e. shortage of food; the enemy will not only cut off their means of communication but will also completely boycott them, leaving them stranded without food or provision. The word "hunger" may also signify a state of famine. (3) Loss of wealth and property. The enemy will raid Muslims repeatedly and inflict heavy losses on them. (4) Loss of lives, i.e. the cruel war inflicted on them by the enemy will also cause loss of life. (5) Loss of fruits. The action of the enemy will not be confined to inflicting loss of lives and property only but will extend to inflicting loss of crops as well. As *ثمرة* (fruit) also means the fruit of one's labour or the profit accruing to a man from any source, loss of fruits also signifies disorganization of trade and industry.

All these losses coming together constituted indeed a very heavy burden; but they were borne by the Muslims with such patience and fortitude as is unrivalled in all history. God tried them and found them truly patient.

### 163. Commentary:

This verse provides a true definition

158. It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided.<sup>164</sup>

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ  
وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

of the term صابر (a patient person) as mentioned in the concluding portion of the preceding verse. A صابر who is vouchsafed glad tidings in the foregoing verse is one who bears all sorts of calamities and afflictions with complete restraint and fortitude, uttering no word of complaint or murmur but sincerely saying, *Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return*. These words comprise a formula which every Muslim is directed to utter when he is afflicted with any misfortune relating to life, property, etc.

God is the Master of all we possess, including our own selves. If the Owner in His infinite wisdom deems fit to take away anything from us, we have no ground for complaint or murmur. We should indeed be grateful for what we receive from God, but there is no justification for murmuring at a loss, because we possess no inherent right to any gift.

The clause *to Allah we belong* also teaches us the great spiritual truth that we have no real connection with the things of this world and, therefore, the loss of such things should cause us no real grief. Similarly, the other part of the formula, viz., *and surely to Him shall we return*, also contains an equally grand principle. We come from God and will have to go back to Him, when we shall have to render an account of all our deeds. So every misfortune that befalls us should,

instead of depressing us, spur us to make yet greater efforts to achieve still better results in life. Thus the formula contained in this verse is not a mere verbal incantation but a great counsel and a great warning. When a Muslim sincerely utters this formula on occasions of loss, grief or bereavement, its true import is bound to be deeply impressed upon his mind and to sustain him in his hours of trials and tribulations. Nay, it is calculated to do something more; it helps to strengthen his connection with his Maker and make Him the centre of all his thoughts and actions.

#### 164. Commentary:

This verse speaks of the great reward of those who prove themselves to be truly صابر or patient. It is, in fact, an explanation of the word, *glad tidings*, occurring in 2:156. Truly patient people who are steadfast in their connection with God and whom each and every affliction finds spiritually rising higher and higher will inherit three things: (1) blessings from their Lord; (2) His mercy; and (3) His guidance. God will bless them in every way, will cover them with His mercy and forgiveness and will look after them, providing guidance for them whenever they may need it. He will, as it were, become their friend and guardian, eager to come to their help on all occasions.



159. Surely, Aṣ-Ṣafā and Al-Marwah are among the "Signs of Allah. It is, therefore, no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House, or performs 'Umrah, to go round the two. And whoso does good beyond what is obligatory, surely then, Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing.<sup>165</sup>

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٩﴾

"22:33.

### 165. Important Words:

الصفا والمروة (Aṣ-Ṣafā and Al-Marwah) are the names of two hills near the Ka'bah in Mecca, the first-mentioned being the nearer of the two. Both Arabian history and the traditions of Islam connect these hills with the story of Hagar and Ishmael when Abraham left them near these hills under God's command. Ishmael was yet a child, and when the scanty provisions ran out and he was in a pitiable condition for want of water, Hagar anxiously and repeatedly ran between these two hills in search of water and help, but none was found. When, however, she was in her seventh circuit, an angel of God called to her saying that God had brought forth a spring of water near her son and that she should go and look to it (Bukhārī, ch. on *Anbiyā*). Thus the hills of صفا (Ṣafā) and مروة (Marwah) became شعائر الله i.e. Signs of God worthy of due honour and respect in the sight of every true believer. The Bible also makes mention of مروة in a somewhat changed form (Gen. 22:2; also Enc. Bib. under Moriah) in connection

with the sacrifice of Abraham's son.

شعائر (Signs) is the plural of شعيرة which is derived from شعر meaning, he knew or he perceived. Thus شعيرة means: (1) anything by means of which another thing may be known; (2) a sign; (3) anything which is considered or is performed as a mark of submission to God; (4) the rites of pilgrimage and practices pertaining thereto (Aqrah).

حج (is on pilgrimage) means: (1) he sought a person or thing; (2) he went or repaired to a person or thing; (3) he went to a person again and again; (4) he visited a holy place; (5) he performed حج (Pilgrimage) to the Ka'bah; (6) he overpowered a person in argument (Aqrah).

اعتمر (performs 'Umrah) is derived from عمر which means, he occupied or tenanted a house; he worshipped God and prayed to Him. اعتمر means, he went to, or visited, a place. عمرة means, visiting a place; worshipping and praying to God; performing Lesser Pilgrimage in which some of the rites of حج are left out (Aqrah).

تطوع (does beyond what is obligatory) is derived from طاع i.e. he

obeyed; he did an act willingly and voluntarily. The infinitive الطوع means: (1) obedience; (2) doing an act willingly without its being obligatory on one. تطوع means, he performed an act with effort and volition. تطوع خيرا means, he performed a good act which was not obligatory on him (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

To a superficial observer the verse under comment dealing with the subject of Pilgrimage appears to have no connection with the preceding ones which deal with the subject of trials and sacrifices. But a deeper study will at once disclose a very close connection between the two. The preceding verses warned Muslims to be prepared for sacrifices and gave them the glad tidings that if they performed the required sacrifices willingly and patiently, God would bless them greatly and would show special mercy to them and would remember them with kindness and would provide guidance for them whenever needed. Now, in order to bring home to them the truth of this promise, He invites the attention of Muslims to the great sacrifice of Abraham near the site of Aş-Şafā and Al-Marwah. Abraham obeyed His Lord and left his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael near these two hills of Mecca, which was then a most desolate tract. The seed was sown in a soil which was apparently the most barren of all soils, but how wonderfully it prospered! God was a most Loving and Faithful God who so fondly remembered His servants, Abraham and Ishmael, even after the

lapse of 2,500 years, and Muslims can expect the same love and the same fidelity from Him, if they too love and obey Him. Şafā and Marwah, as explained under Important Words above, are two hills which stand as a memorial to Hagar's great patience and extraordinary loyalty to God on the one hand and to God's special treatment of her and her son on the other. A visit to these hills makes the pilgrim deeply impressed with the love, fidelity and power of God.

The words, *it is no sin for him*, should not be taken to mean that performing the circuit between Şafā and Marwah is only permissible and not obligatory. The expression is used simply to remove the aversion to such performance found among certain persons on the basis of the fact that heathen Arabs had placed two idols on these two hills (Muslim). God removed this erroneous notion by saying that it was no sin to perform the circuit between Şafā and Marwah, which on account of the great sacrifice of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael on the one hand and the resulting blessings of God on the other, had become شعائر الله i.e. great Signs of God. That the performance of these circuits is obligatory in both حجة and عمرة (the Greater and the Lesser Pilgrimage) is clear from the practice of the Holy Prophet and his injunctions to his followers (Bukhārī, ch. *Al-Hajj*).

The words, *whoso does good beyond what is obligatory*, do not refer to حجة (Greater Pilgrimage), which under certain conditions is

160. Those who conceal what We have sent down of Signs and guidance after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, <sup>a</sup>it is these whom Allah curses; and *so* curse them those who curse.<sup>166</sup>

161. But <sup>b</sup>they who repent and amend and openly declare *the*

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ  
وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي  
الْكِتَابِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ  
اللُّعُنُونَ ۖ

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ

<sup>a</sup>2:175. <sup>b</sup>3:90; 4:147; 5:40; 24:6.

obligatory on each Muslim once in a lifetime, but to <sup>عمره</sup> (Lesser Pilgrimage) which is not obligatory but simply supererogatory. The words may also be considered to refer to any additional <sup>حج</sup> or Pilgrimage which a Muslim may perform, after he has performed the one obligatory Pilgrimage.

As this verse mentions the subject of Pilgrimage only secondarily, we are not giving here a note on the rites and philosophy of which will be discussed when we come to the relevant verses.

### 166. Important Words:

<sup>يلعنهم</sup> (curses them). For the meaning of <sup>لعن</sup> see note on 2:89.

### Commentary:

The present verse has been taken to apply either to Muslims or Jews. In the former case the verse would be taken as a warning to Muslims that they should ever be careful to preach the truth of Islam and should in no circumstances hide or neglect it but should ever be ready to proclaim it, however bitter the opposition. Failing

this, they will not only not attain the nearness of God but will be cast away from Him. If applied to Jews, and that indeed is the right application, the connection with the preceding verse may be easily seen in the reference to Aş-Şafā and Al-Marwah in that verse. It was at these places that Abraham left his wife Hagar, and his son, Ishmael, under God's command and it was here that, while building the Ka'bah, Abraham and Ishmael prayed to God for the appearance of a great Prophet among their progeny. The Quran thus refers here to the Jews who were concealing the prophecies contained in their Scriptures about the Holy Prophet. The Jews are warned that if they concealed the clear prophecies given to them about the Arabian Prophet, in spite of the fact that they have now been reminded of them through the Quran, God would cast them away, depriving them of His mercy and condemning them to punishment in Hell. They are further warned that as God is the Lord of the entire universe, His curse will not come alone but everything which is subservient to Him will then begin to

truth, it is these to whom I turn with forgiveness, and I am Oft-Returning *with compassion and Merciful*.<sup>167</sup>

162. Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, <sup>a</sup>on them shall be the curse of Allah and of angels and of men all together.<sup>168</sup>

أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦١﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا  
أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ  
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:88.

curse them—angels, men, the elements, laws of nature and all.

### 167. Important Words:

اصلحوا (amend) is derived from صلح which means, he or it was or became good or virtuous or just or proper. اصلح means, he reformed him or he reformed himself or he amended. When اصلح is followed by the preposition بين (between) as in اصلح بينهم it means, he brought about reconciliation between them (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

God, not being vindictive, is ever ready to pardon those who repent and rectify their mistakes. But repentance must be sincere and real. Mere verbal expression of regret is not sufficient. The evildoer must try to make full amends for the wrong committed and should promise to bring about in himself a real change in future. It is only after a real change takes place in the sinner that forgiveness is promised to him. As to the Jews who concealed prophecies regarding the Holy Prophet, the verse lays down three conditions as a proof of real

repentance. *Firstly*, they should declare their repentance and turn back from their wrong course. *Secondly*, they should make amends practically, not only by reforming themselves but also by trying to reform those who have been misled through them. *Thirdly*, they should openly declare the truth which they have been hiding regarding the prophecies in their Scriptures. If they fulfilled these conditions, they would yet find God Forgiving and Merciful.

### 168. Commentary:

The word الناس (men) may either mean "all men" or "holy and virtuous men", i.e. those who deserve to be called "men" in the real sense of the word. This distinction is not arbitrary; for there is a class of men whom the Quran describes as "cattle or even worse" (7:180).

The cursing of the angels and the holy men means that as angels and holy men obey their Lord and Master and never go against His wishes, they would naturally sever connections with the disbelievers—the Jews—when they see Him doing the same.

163. <sup>a</sup>They shall remain under it. The punishment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be granted respite.<sup>169</sup>

164. And <sup>b</sup>your God is One God; there is no God but He, the Gracious, the Merciful.<sup>170</sup>

خَلِيدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَخَفُّ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ  
وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

وَاللَّهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:89. <sup>b</sup>2:256; 16:23; 22:35; 37:5; 59:23, 24; 112:2.

The angels, one of whose works is to help good men and punish the wicked, will turn against them and all good men will also strive to bring their evil efforts to naught. They will find the entire forces of God ranged against them.

If the word الناس (men) be taken to refer to all men, then the clause would mean that all men being subordinate to God, He would so arrange that no people would be able to help them against His decree.

### 169. Important Words:

ينظرون (be granted respite) is formed from نظر which means, (1) he looked; (2) he granted respite. They say نظر فلانا i.e. he granted him respite in respect of the payment of debt (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

God is slow to punish but when the cup of the iniquities of a disbelieving people becomes full to the brim and all warning is lost upon them, then severe punishment overtakes them, and no further respite is granted; and as the punishment is primarily meant as a cure, it is of sufficiently long duration and persists till all vestige of spiritual disease is rooted out.

### 170. Commentary:

As all sin springs from feebleness of faith, this verse fittingly refers to the Unity of God, signifying that if people only believed in God's Unity and refrained from setting up false gods, they would never digress from the right path. It must not, however, be understood that idol-worship consists in worshipping images only. Every man who loves anyone other than God as he ought to love Him, or fears anyone as he ought to fear Him, or trusts in anyone as he ought to trust in Him, is really guilty of idol-worship and must suffer the consequences thereof. In fact, the principal and primary object of religion, is to establish the Unity of God, and the Quran has dealt with this subject in a manner and to an extent which has no parallel in any other Book. Islam condemns both شرك جلي (manifest or visible idolatry) and شرك خفي (hidden or invisible idolatry) in the strongest of terms.

The verse may also signify that, with the advent of Islam, God, the Maker of heavens and earth, no longer remains the God of this or that people only, but becomes the God of all peoples and all mankind. The

## R. 20.

165. "Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth,—are indeed Signs for the people who understand.<sup>171</sup>

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَاجْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلِّ الَّتِي  
تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا  
أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ  
الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ  
دَابَّةٍ ۚ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ  
الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ  
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:191; 10:7; 30:23; 45:6.

word الرحمن (the Gracious or the Provider for all peoples) occurring at the end of the verse also points to the same truth. In this sense the verse would be considered to be particularly connected with 2:159 above which speaks of the Şafā and the Marwah as the special Signs of Allah, serving as pointers to the mission of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

### 171. Important Words:

اختلاف (alternation) is derived from خلف. They say خلفه i.e. he or it was or became his or its successor. خلف الرجل means, he came after or remained after the man and stood in his place. اختلفه means, he followed him as his successor. اختلفوا means (1) they came one after another by turn; (2) they differed or disagreed (Aqrab).

الفلك (ships) is derived from the verb

فلك meaning, it became round or circular. الفلك (al-fulk) means a ship, or a boat, probably because it looks round and shapeless when seen at sea from a distance. The word is both singular and plural. الفلك (al-falak) means, the vault of heaven or the firmament in which the stars move. This is also probably owing to the apparently round shape of the sky (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

دابة (beast) is the active participle from دب which means, he or it crept or crawled or walked slowly like an ant or a reptile or a child or a weak or sickly person. دابة means, all such animals or insects as creep or crawl or walk slowly (Aqrab). The word is used about all moving animals, whether big or small, whether walking on two legs or on four legs or creeping on the belly, etc. (24:46).

It is also used about beasts used for riding or for carrying burden, like the horse, the mule, the donkey, etc. (Lane).

المسخر (pressed into service) is the passive participle from سخر *sakhkhara*. They say سخره (*sakhkhara-hū* or سخره *sakhara-hū*, not سخر *sakhira* which gives a different meaning), i.e. (1) he employed him or imposed on him a task without compensation; (2) he subjugated him and made him subservient to himself. Thus مسخر is that who or which has been made subservient to another, being unable to free himself or itself from constraint (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse gives a twofold meaning, one literal and the other metaphorical. In the former sense, it supplies an argument in support of the existence of God referred to in the preceding verse. A careful study of the universe unfailingly points to a Creator on the one hand and to man being created with a definite object on the other. It also proves that, having created the world, God did not leave it alone but continues to watch over and control its affairs and is the First Cause of all change and every working in the universe. Heaven and earth, night and day (with alternating light and darkness), the supply of provisions, rainfall with its power of quickening and devastating, the means of communications, the blowing of winds, and shade and sunshine, all point to one controlling agency, God, the Maker of heavens and earth. And if God has done so much for the material requirements of

man, He cannot be imagined to have neglected his spiritual needs which are much more important. Let all thinking men think and ponder and again think and ponder.

The Quran takes the universe as a whole to prove its theme. The objects of nature taken individually do not furnish such conclusive evidence of the existence of God as the whole universe taken together. The earth may be said to owe its existence to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or a similar reason may be given for the origin of the sun and the moon and so on. But when the universe as one united whole and the deep order that permeates it are taken into consideration, it becomes impossible to escape the conclusion that this universe has not come into existence accidentally. Indeed, the consummate harmony that prevails throughout the universe, forcefully points to the fact that the whole system has been created and is being directed by one Intelligent Being Who is All-Powerful and All-Knowing.

Taken in the metaphorical sense, the ship mentioned in the verse will be taken to stand for Prophets who help men to cross the gulfs of carnal desires and materialistic concepts of things which separate men from God, rain being likened to God's revelation which comes down like rain and gives life to the world after it has become dead. The clouds send down no new water. Water already exists in the vast oceans of the earth but, as it is impure, men cannot make use of it. God purifies it and changes it into clouds and then sends it back to earth in the form of pure rainwater.

166. And there are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship other than Allah, loving them as they should love Allah. But believers are stronger in their love for Allah. And if those who transgress could *now* see the time when they shall see the punishment, *they would realize* that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is severe in punishing.<sup>172</sup>

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
أُنْدَادًا يُحِبُّوهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ  
أَمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ ۚ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ  
ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ  
جَمِيعًا ۖ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٦﴾

Similarly, by sending a new revelation God purifies beliefs, which, with the passage of time, get mixed up with false notions and superstitious ideas. It is inconceivable that God Who supplies man with fresh rainwater for the maintenance of his physical life should have omitted to supply him with heavenly water which is so necessary for the preservation of his spiritual life. Similarly, night and day stand for the alternating periods of light and darkness, it being hinted that the coming of the Holy Prophet heralds the dawn of a new day.

Moreover, by laying special emphasis on the study of the phenomena of nature in the verse under comment, the attention of disbelievers is also drawn to the fact that they could not possibly hope to succeed in their designs against the Holy Prophet, because the whole universe is controlled by God and is working in favour of His Prophet and in furthering his cause.

### 172. Important Words:

دان (other than) is derived from دان i.e. he or it was or became low, mean or weak. دان used as an adjective means, low, mean, paltry, or contemptible; also high and noble. When used as a preposition, as in the present verse, دان gives the sense of (1) this side of, i.e. behind or lower in rank; (2) that side of, i.e. ahead or higher in rank; (3) other than (Aqrab). انداد (objects of worship). See 2:23.

### Commentary:

While dealing with the subject of idolatry the Quran makes use of the following four words: (1) د (like or equal); (2) شريك (co-partner or sharer); (3) اله (worthy of worship); and (4) رب (sustainer). While the first two words are used only about those objects of worship that are other than God, the last two are used about God also. The word د (like or equal) which is used in the present verse refers to such objects of worship as are supposed to



167. *Aye, they would certainly realize if they could see the time*<sup>a</sup>when those who were followed shall disown their followers and shall see the punishment, and all their ties shall be cut asunder.<sup>173</sup>

168. And those who followed shall say: <sup>b</sup>"If we could only return, we would disown them

إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا  
وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمْ  
الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٧٣﴾

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً  
فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا ۚ كَذَلِكَ

<sup>a</sup>28:64, 65; 34:33, 34. <sup>b</sup>23:100; 26:103.

be like God or equal to Him, being contrary or opposed to the true God. Among those who have set up انداد (equals) with God may be mentioned the Zoroastrians who believe in two independent gods, i.e. Ormazd, the God of Light, and Ahriman, the God of Darkness.

Love of God is the essence of all religion. In Islam it forms the central point, the pivot round which the whole Islamic teaching revolves. No religion has emphasised the love of God as much as Islam has. The Holy Prophet was so much engrossed in God that he was spoken of by the pagan Arabs as having fallen in love with Him, even as a lover falls in love with his beloved. No other subject has been so completely and so repeatedly dealt with in the Quran as God's beauty and excellence and such of His attributes as create an irresistible love and longing in the human soul for his Lord and Master Who is spoken of in the Quran as a "Most Loving God" (11:91; 85:15). Yet Christian writers accuse Islam of being a cold and calculating religion,

bereft of all love for God. Can anything be farther from the truth?

### 173. Important Words:

تبرأ (disown) is derived from برى. They say برى من العيب او الدين i.e. he became free from defect or got clear of debt. بارأ شريكه means, he became separated from his partner. تبرأ من فلان means, he separated from such a one; he got clear of him; he declared to have no connection with him; he renounced or disowned him (Aqrab).

اسباب (ties) is the plural of سبب which signifies: (1) a tie or a rope; (2) a means which helps a person to reach his destination; (3) a way or a path, leading to something; (4) love or relationship (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse vividly describes the scene when those guilty of idolatry will be called to account for their evil beliefs and practices. They will look to their leaders for help and guidance, but the latter will disown them and all ties of love and kinship between them will be cut asunder and all supports and all means of rescue will be lost.

as they have disowned us.' Thus will Allah show them their works as anguish for them, and they shall not get out of the Fire.<sup>174</sup>

يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ

#### R. 21.

169. O ye men, eat of <sup>a</sup>what is lawful *and* good in the earth;

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا

<sup>a</sup>5:89; 8:70; 16:115.

The verse is a stern warning to those who blindly follow their leaders and, being misled by them, reject God's Messengers.

#### 174. Important Words:

كرّة (return) is the infinitive noun from كر. They say كر الفارس i.e. the horseman returned to the attack after he had raced back. فعله كره بعد كره means, he did it again and again. كره therefore means: (1) returning to the attack; (2) returning to the original state (3) a turn or time (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

حسرة (anguish) is the plural of حسرة which is derived from حسر. They say حسر البحر i.e. the sea sank or receded from the shore. حسر الرجل means: (1) the man was tired and wearied (2) he was sorrowful and grieved. حسرة means: (1) feeling intense anguish at a loss sustained or harm suffered; (2) regret or compunction; (3) grief or sorrow for a thing that has escaped one (Aqrab & Tāj).

#### Commentary:

Having despaired of receiving help from their leaders, the disbelievers will, on the Day of Judgement, wish that they may be sent back to the world so that they may denounce

these leaders in this world just as they were disowning them in the next. But this will be only a vain desire doomed to perish unfulfilled. Nay, the selfsame desire will become a source of anguish and punishment for them.

The clause, *they shall not get out of the Fire*, does not mean that the punishment of Hell will be unending. Islam does not believe in the eternity of Hell. While the Quran speaks of the blessings of Paradise as never-ending and everlasting, it does not say so of the punishment of Hell but simply speaks of it as being very long (11:108, 109). The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. "There will come a time over Hell," he is reported to have said, "when there will remain none in it" ('Ummāl). The verse only means that, being unable to bear the torment of Hell, the dwellers of the Fire will wish to come out of it, but will not be able to do so (32:21), until their term of punishment is over. The word *Fire* as used in this verse may also mean the fire of anguish and agony in which they shall burn on account of their designs and cherished hopes having come to naught.

and "follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely <sup>b</sup>he is to you an open enemy.<sup>175</sup>

طَيِّبًا ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:209; 6:143; 24:22. <sup>b</sup>7:23; 12:6; 28:16; 35:7; 36:61.

### 175. Important Words:

حلال (lawful) is the noun-infinitive from حل which has several meanings. حل العقد means, he unloosened the tie. حل بالمكان means, he alighted at the house. حل عليه غضب الله means, God's punishment came down on him or befell him. حل الشيء means, the thing became lawful. حل اليمين means, he absolved himself from the oath. حلال is, therefore, that the use of which has been permitted by God; a lawful thing. The word is the opposite of حرام which means, a forbidden or unlawful thing (Aqrab).

طاب (good) is derived from طاب meaning, he or it became good. طاب الشيء means, the thing was good or pure or wholesome. Thus طيب would mean, good, pure, wholesome and agreeable (Aqrab).

خطوة (footsteps) is the plural of خطا which is derived from خطا which means, he stepped or walked, خطوة means, the distance between the two feet of a person while walking. The clause لا تتبعوا خطوات الشيطان would also mean, do not follow the ways of Satan (Aqrab).

بان (open) is derived from بان meaning: (1) it became clear and manifest; or (2) it became separated or disunited or cut off. بان الشيء means (1) he or it made the thing clear; or (2) he or it cut the thing into pieces or made it disunited. بان الشيء means, the thing became clear. Thus مبين would

mean: (1) a being or thing which is clear and manifest; (2) a being or thing which makes other things clear; and (3) a being or thing which cuts another thing into pieces and makes it disunited (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

Good actions must accompany true faith. So with this verse begins a discussion of the second part of Abraham's prayer regarding the work of the Promised Prophet, i.e., the teaching of the laws of Sharī'ah and of the wisdom underlying them.

Henceforward ordinances about Prayer, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Zakāh are given and so are the laws relating to social matters and as food plays an important part in the formation of a man's character, regulations concerning it are mentioned first. According to Islam, all food should be: (1) حلال i.e. allowed by the Law; and (2) it should also be طيب i.e. good, pure, wholesome and agreeable. Under the second condition, sometimes even lawful things become forbidden. Thus, for instance, the eating of goat's flesh is حلال or lawful; but if some flesh becomes rotten and putrefied, it will not be طيب and will consequently not be permissible. This distinction between حلال (lawful) and طيب (good and pure) food is not to be found in any teaching except that of Islam. So comprehensive is the

170. He only <sup>a</sup>enjoins upon you what is evil and what is foul, and that you say of Allah what you do not know.<sup>176</sup>

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:269; 24:22.

Islamic teaching on this subject that not only are conditions laid down as to when lawful things become prohibited, as in this verse, but also as to when even unlawful food becomes permissible (2:174; 5:4; 6:120, 146; 16:116).

The prohibition against following Satan, coming immediately after the commandment with respect to food, alludes to the influence which physical actions exercise on the moral and spiritual conditions of man. The use of unlawful and unwholesome food tends to impair our moral and spiritual faculties, while lawful and wholesome food improves our morals and helps the development of our spiritual powers. This subject is also dealt with in 23:52.

As explained under Important Words above, the word مبین gives three different meanings. Thus عدو مبین would mean (1) that Satan is a manifest and open enemy of man; (2) that Satan is not only manifest himself but also makes his connections manifest—leaving a visible trace of wickedness wherever he treads; and (3) that he is always striving to create disunion among the Faithful and to cut asunder all such ties as God has ordered to be made firm. In this connection see also 2:28.

### 176. Important Words:

سوء (evil) is the noun-infinitive from

ساء meaning, he or it became bad or evil. ساء الامر فلانا means, the thing was disagreeable to such a one and made him sorrowful. سوء means: (1) evil, bad or wicked; (2) mischief and corruption; (3) anything that makes a person sad and sorrowful (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

فحشاء (foul) is derived from فحش i.e. it became excessive or immoderate; or it became manifestly or excessively bad, evil or unseemly. Thus فحشاء means: (1) anything manifestly or excessively bad, evil, etc.; (2) anything forbidden by God; (3) foul talk or saying; and (4) illegal intercourse or fornication (Lane & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse speaks of the subtle ways by which Satan misleads man. He first prompts him to do deeds which do not appear to be manifestly wicked and the influence of which is confined to the person of the doer alone. Then, step by step, he makes the deluded person a hardened sinner, causing him to lose all sense of modesty, till finally the man goes so far as to make innovations in religion for which he possesses neither knowledge nor authority. As Satan's promptings are never based on knowledge, so the natural consequence is that those who follow him begin to attribute to God things without having the least authority for

171. And “when it is said to them, ‘Follow that which Allah has sent down,’ they say: ‘Nay, we will follow that wherein we found our fathers.’ What! even if their fathers had no sense at all and no guidance?<sup>177</sup>

172. And the case of those who disbelieve is like the case of one who shouts to that which hears nothing but a call and a cry.<sup>b</sup> They are deaf, dumb, and blind—so they do not understand.<sup>178</sup>

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً ۚ صُمُّوا بِكُمْ عَمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:105; 10:79; 21:53, 54; 31:22. <sup>b</sup>See 2:19.

so doing. Their theories are based on ignorance and not on knowledge. In fact, all knowledge is based on close observation, and close observation cannot be had, unless one enjoys nearness of a thing. So it is futile to expect true knowledge of God from those who are away from Him.

### 177. Commentary:

It is indeed strange, but nevertheless a hard fact, that in matters of religion which so deeply concern man, he is often content to follow blindly the footsteps of his forefathers and does not even care to satisfy himself that his forefathers were wise and well-guided people. On the other hand, in worldly matters where only the interests of this life are at stake, and that too partially, he often takes meticulous care to see that he adopts the right course and does not blindly follow others.

### 178. Important Words:

نَعَن (shouts) is derived from نَعَن which means, he cried aloud. They say نَعَن الرَّاعِي بَغْنَمِهِ i.e. the shepherd shouted to his flock. نَعَنُ الْمُؤَذِّن means, the (*Mu'adhdhin*) raised his voice to call people to Prayer (Aqrab).

دَعَاء (call). دَعَاه means, he called a person by addressing him (Aqrab).

نِدَاء (cry) means: (1) a loud voice or cry; (2) a general call without any specific person being addressed (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

In this verse the Holy Prophet has been likened to a herdsman who shouts to his flock but they hear nothing except the sound, being unable to understand the meaning of the words uttered by him. Similarly, the people whom the Prophet addresses are like a herd of animals

173. <sup>a</sup>O ye who believe, eat of the good things We have provided for you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is He Whom you worship.<sup>179</sup>

174. <sup>b</sup>He has made unlawful to you only that which dies of itself, and blood and the flesh of swine, and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked. But he who is driven by necessity, being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, it shall be no sin for him. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>180</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ  
مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ  
إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ  
الْخِزْيِرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَن  
اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ  
عَلَيْهِ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:6; 16:115; 23:52; 40:65. <sup>b</sup>5:4; 6:146; 16:116.

unable to follow and understand his call. The words of the verse fully expressed would read somewhat like this: مثل الذين كفروا كمثل اصحاب الذي يتفق i.e. "The case of those who disbelieve is like that of a people surrounding one who shouts, etc." The Holy Prophet conveyed the Divine Message to disbelievers. They heard his voice but made no effort to grasp the meaning of his message. His words fell, as it were, on deaf ears, with the result that the spiritual faculties of the disbelievers became wholly vitiated and they stooped low to the level of animals and beasts (7:180; 25:45).

### 179. Commentary:

The injunction contained in the words, "eat of طيبات i.e. good, pure and wholesome things", indicates that

Muslims are not allowed to use things which may, in any way, injure their physical or moral or spiritual health, though they may be حلال i.e. allowed by Law. The injunction is thus very important and far-reaching in its effect. The words, *We have provided for you*, further imply that Muslims are also not allowed to make use of things acquired by unfair and unlawful means. Only the things bestowed by God, i.e. those lawfully earned, are to be used.

### 180. Important Words:

الميتة (that which dies of itself) is derived from مات i.e. he died. ميتة means: (1) an animal that has died a natural death (Aqrah); (2) an animal that has not been slaughtered in a manner prescribed by Law (Lane & Mufradāt).

الخنزير (swine). Authorities differ as to the derivation of this word, some deriving it from خنزى and others from خزر. The word الخنزيرة means, hard and rugged land; or a clumsy, badly-finished axe. خزر الرجل means, the man looked with the hinder parts or outer angles of his eyes (Lisān). خزرت العين means, the eye was or became narrow and small. خزر الرجل means, the man looked from the outer angle of the eye; or he had a distortion of one of his eyes. The Arabs say: كل خنزيرا خزر i.e. all swine look from the outer angles of their eyes. خزر المرء means the man affected or pretended to be cunning. الخنزير means, the swine, the hog, the pig; a certain well-known foul animal the eating of whose flesh is said to be forbidden by every Prophet (Lane). The Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement says of the word خنزير: "The very name of this foul animal contains an allusion to the prohibition of its flesh. It is a combination of خنز and اى, the first part meaning, 'very foul' and the second, 'I see'. The word thus literally means, 'I see it very foul'...What is yet more remarkable is that in Hindi this animal is known by the name सूँ which is similarly composed of two words, i.e. سوء and اى, the latter part being identical with the latter part of the Arabic word and the former being the exact equivalent of the first part of the Arabic form. The Hindi word, therefore, exactly means the same as the Arabic, viz. 'I see it very foul'...In Hindi this animal is also known as بد meaning bad or foul which is probably a translation of the original Arabic word" (Teachings of Islam).

أهل (invoked) is derived from هل

meaning, it (the moon) made its appearance; he (the man) cried aloud. أهل also means, it made its appearance; he called or cried aloud. أهل بالتسمية على الذبيحة means, he invoked or pronounced the name of God while slaughtering an animal. أهل السيف بفلان means, the sword cut into him (Aqrab). أهلال which is the infinitive-noun from أهل means, to raise one's voice aloud by way of exclamation, on seeing the هلال or the moon of the first night (Mufradāt). Thus أهل به لغير الله would mean, on which the name of anything besides God has been invoked at the time of slaughter; or which has been cut or slaughtered for a being other than God.

اضطر (driven by necessity) is derived from ضر which means, it did harm. ضره الى كذا means, it forced him to resort to that. اضطره means, he compelled him against his will. اضطره الى كذا means, he compelled him against his will to have recourse to that (Aqrab).

بغى (disobedient) is derived from بغى meaning, he rebelled; he disobeyed; he committed a wrong. باغى is really باغى being the active participle from بغى meaning, one who disobeys; one who is rebellious (Aqrab).

عاد (exceeding the limit) is the active participle from عدا i.e. he exceeded the proper or the prescribed limit. عدى عليه means, he transgressed against him. عادى is really عادى meaning, one who exceeds the limit (Aqrab).

اثم (sin). The verb اثم means, he did a thing which was unlawful for him; he did a thing which made him deserving of punishment. Thus the noun اثم means: (1) anything unlawful, i.e. a sin; (2) anything which makes a person deserving of punishment

(Aqrah); (3) anything that pricks the mind as something evil (Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

This verse speaks only of food that is حرام or unlawful. It makes no mention of طيبات or pure and wholesome things to which reference has already been made in the preceding verse. It should not be supposed that the four things mentioned in this verse are the only things prohibited in Islam. As a matter of fact, Islam prohibits the use of many things; but they are divided into grades or classes, some of them being حرام or unlawful and others being ممنوع or simply forbidden. The verse under comment mentions only the former class. The forbidden things have been stated by the Holy Prophet and are mentioned in Ḥadīth. They must not be used by the Faithful but they cannot be called حرام or unlawful. In fact, there is a great difference between unlawful (حرام) and forbidden (ممنوع) things. Islam recognizes due difference in the importance of different things, and so all prohibitions cannot be classed together and treated as of equal importance. The use of حرام or an unlawful thing has a great and direct bearing on the moral and spiritual development of man but it is not so with a ممنوع or forbidden thing which stands on a lower level of importance, though both are prohibited.

Among the things declared حرام or unlawful in this verse, the injuriousness of consuming blood and the flesh of a dead animal as food has been recognized by most authorities on medicine. The use of the flesh of

swine has also proved to be injurious not only to the physical health of man, but also to his moral and spiritual health. The swine eats filth and takes delight in living in dirty places. It has indecent habits and possesses the evil trait of sex-perversion. Tape-worms, scrofula, cancer and encysted trichina are known to be more prevalent among pork-eating peoples. The use of pork also causes trichinosis.

The clause, *and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked*, refers to that animal at the time of whose slaughter the name of any deity other than Allah is invoked or that animal which is slaughtered with a view to winning the pleasure of an idol or a saint etc., even though the name of Allah may have been mentioned while slaughtering it. Hence, all such animals as are sacrificed in order to propitiate a false deity or a saint, or any food that is cooked as an offering to a deceased person have been condemned as unlawful. Such foods are spiritually harmful. The incentive to these offerings is شرك (i.e. idolatry) and شرك is tantamount to rebellion against God.

In spite of the fact that the above mentioned things have been declared to be unlawful, the verse goes on to say that if for want of food the very life of a person should be in danger, considerations of the preservation of human life must temporarily prevail over other considerations. This is a case of choosing the lesser of two evils. Hence the verse very wisely makes an exception in case of a real and urgent necessity when no other



175. <sup>a</sup>Those who conceal that which Allah has sent down of the Book and <sup>b</sup>take in exchange for that a paltry price, they fill their bellies with nothing but

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا<sup>أ</sup> أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا

<sup>a</sup>See 2:147. <sup>b</sup>See 2:42.

food is available and one is in real danger of losing one's life if one does not use the unlawful food. In fact, of the four unlawful things, the first three have been declared unlawful mostly on the basis of the fact that they are injurious to physical and moral health, and it is certainly wise to permit their use in case of urgent necessity when there is real danger to life. As for the fourth thing, i.e. a food consecrated to any other being beside Allah, it is evident that it is not injurious intrinsically. It is injurious only from the point of view of faith. Therefore when such a thing is used merely to save one's life, which may be so usefully employed in the service of religion, there can be no real objection in eating it, because this extremely rare act cannot be considered as involving شرك or idolatry, particularly when it is performed with the sanction of God.

Permission for the exceptional use of such things is, however, qualified by two important conditions: (1) that one who resorts to this use must not be باغى (i.e. disobedient). There should be no lurking spirit of revolt or disobedience behind the act. The circumstances must be real and the condition genuine, and nothing should be done out of design and wilfulness; (2) that the user of

unlawful food under exceptional circumstances should not become عار i.e. he should not exceed the limit. He should confine himself to such quantity only as is absolutely essential to save life. Thus the exceptional use is permissible only at a time when one is under *bona fide* constraint and is in real danger, and then only to the extent which is absolutely necessary for saving life.

Though it has been declared in this verse that there is no sin in partaking of a prohibited food when no revolt or transgression is intended, yet as one might err in judging what is revolt or transgression and what is not, and thus be unconsciously guilty of breaking a divine commandment, the Quran adds the words: *surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful*, meaning that an unintentional deviation will be forgiven by the Merciful God. The clause also reminds a Muslim that though it has been made permissible for him to take unlawful food in exceptional circumstances, yet such circumstances may be due to certain hidden shortcomings of his own for which he should seek God's forgiveness, and that if he does so he will find God Forgiving and Merciful. In this connection see also 5:4; 6:146 & 16:116.

fire. "Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment."<sup>181</sup>

176. It is they <sup>b</sup> who have taken error in exchange for guidance and punishment for forgiveness. How great is their endurance of the Fire!<sup>182</sup>

النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ  
وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَى  
وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ  
عَلَى النَّارِ ﴿١٧٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:160. <sup>b</sup>2:17; 3:178; 4:45.

### 181. Important Words:

يُزَكِّيهِمْ (purify them) is from زَكَى meaning, he purified him; he elevated him (Aqrab). See also 2:130.

### Commentary:

Sin generally originates from an undue love of the world but the world is indeed a small thing as compared with the Hereafter (9:38). Those who forsake truth or conceal it for the things of this world eat naught but fire which will eventually consume their own bodies. The verse beautifully hints that the things of this world, as opposed to spiritual blessings, are like the hellfire of the next. As food goes to make up the tissues of the body, so will the body of an enemy of truth eating fire become one whole mass of fire, serving as fuel for the fire of Hell. The words also signify that as fire cannot satisfy hunger and thirst, but rather increases them, so the things of this world cannot bring about peace of mind and contentment but rather the reverse of them. The verse also constitutes a stern warning to those preachers who, in order to gain worldly ends, accommodate their

sermons to the views of the listeners and refrain from speaking the truth.

The words *Allah will not speak to them* do not mean that God will not speak to them at all; for God, being the Lord and Master, will speak even to the guilty on the Day of Judgement, but such speech will be like that of a judge condemning a criminal to punishment. What is meant is that God will not speak to them with love and affection.

The words, *nor will He purify them*, mean that He will not adjudge them as purified but will declare them unclean and unholy. These words may also mean that on the Day of Judgement, God will not elevate them or exalt them to Himself but will leave them abased and neglected. Again, as these people opposed the truth in the world in order that they might enjoy the good things thereof, they will correspondingly have a painful punishment in the Hereafter and will be deprived of all sweetness of life in the world to come (see important Words under 2:8).

### 182. Commentary:

The words *ما اصبرهم على النار* i.e. *how*

177. That is because <sup>a</sup>Allah has sent down the Book with the truth; and surely, they who disagree concerning the Book are gone far in enmity.<sup>183</sup>

**R. 22.**

178. <sup>b</sup>It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and <sup>c</sup>spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask *for charity*, and for *ransoming* the captives; and who observes

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ  
وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي  
شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قَبْلَ  
الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ  
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ  
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي  
الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ  
السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ  
وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ

<sup>a</sup>17:106. <sup>b</sup>2:190. <sup>c</sup>76:9.

*great is their endurance of the Fire*, and similar other expressions are used in the Arabic language to express wonder on the part of the onlooker and tenacity and intensiveness of the relevant quality in the object. The expression, therefore, means that though the deeds of disbelievers are sure to bring down upon them the great punishment of Fire, yet they so tenaciously persist in their wicked course as to indicate that they are, as it were, possessed of great endurance of its torment.

**183. Commentary:**

The estrangement of the disbelievers from the truth and their long association with falsehood have

made them callous and incapable of knowing and accepting the Quranic revelation. Just as a sick person sometimes loses his faculty of taste and consequently declines to partake of delicious things, similarly these people, owing to their lack of contact with truth for a long time, have become inclined to reject the word of God. They prefer small worldly gains to the great spiritual and material advantages that would certainly have accrued to them, if they had accepted the truth. The words *في شقاق بعيد* i.e. "gone far in enmity" signify that there has come to exist a wide gulf between these people on the one hand and the truth on the other.

Prayer and pays the Zakāh; and those <sup>a</sup>who fulfil their promise when they have made one, and the patient in <sup>b</sup>poverty and afflictions and *the steadfast* in time of war; <sup>c</sup>it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing.<sup>184</sup>

بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا<sup>ج</sup> وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي  
الْبُاسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ<sup>ط</sup>  
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا<sup>ط</sup> وَأُولَئِكَ  
هُمْ الْمُقْتَدِرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>9:4; 13:21. <sup>b</sup>2:215; 6:43; 7:95. <sup>c</sup>49:16.

### 184. Important Words:

البر (righteousness) is derived from بر. They say بر والده i.e. he obeyed his father or he behaved kindly and lovingly towards him. بر الله means, he obeyed God. بر في قوله means, he spoke truthfully. برت الصلوة means, the Prayer was accepted. بر (birr) therefore, means: (1) a gift or favour; (2) obedience; (3) righteousness; (4) truthfulness (Aqrab); also (5) extensive goodness or goodness of a high order (Mufradāt). And بر (barr) is one who does good to others. It is also one of the attributive names of God (Aqrab).

ابن السبيل (wayfarer) literally means, son of the road. The word signifies: (1) one who travels much (Lane); (2) a traveller or wayfarer who is far away from home, i.e. one who is on a long journey (Mufradāt); (3) simply one on journey; (4) one whose way has been cut short to him, i.e. one who is stranded on the way (Aqrab).

الرقاب (captives) is the plural of رقبه (a captive or a slave) which is derived from رقب. They say رقبه i.e. he waited for or looked for him; he watched or guarded him; he was on his guard against him; he put a rope round his

neck. رقبه means: (1) neck; (2) the hinder part thereof; (3) a person or being possessing a neck; (4) a slave or bondman or captive or prisoner, particularly a slave or captive who has contracted with his owner or custodian for his freedom. Thus the expression في الرقاب would mean, in the ransoming of slaves or captives, etc. (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

البأساء (poverty) and البأس (war) are both derived from بئس or يؤس i.e. (1) he was or became strong and valiant in war or fight; (2) he was or became in a state of great want or poverty or distress. البأساء means: (1), distress; (2) poverty; (3) hardship; (4) misfortune; (5) calamity; and (6) war. And البأس means (1) might or strength in war or fight; (2) courage, valour and prowess; (3) war or fight; (4) fear; (5) punishment or torment; and (6) harm or injury, as in لا بأس به i.e. there is no harm in it (Lane & Aqrab). See also below.

الضراء (afflictions) is derived from ضر meaning, he caused him a loss or an injury. الضراء means: (1) vicissitudes of time; (2) hardship; (3) loss of life or property; (4) afflictions; and (5)

famine (Aqrab). الضراء is especially that evil or affliction which relates to one's person, as disease, etc. whereas البأساء is that which relates to property, as poverty, etc. (Lane).

### Commentary:

The verse points to an important principle relating to form and spirit. Every commandment must have an outward form as well as an underlying spirit. What, however, is really meant is the underlying spirit and not the outward form which mostly serves as an outer shell for preserving the inner kernel. To illustrate this principle, the verse refers to the commandment relating to the turning of faces to a particular direction while offering Prayers. The verse points out that Islam has not directed the Faithful to face in a particular direction during Prayers, because it considers such an act to be of any intrinsic virtue. The fixing of a special direction is merely meant to bring about uniformity, whereas what really counts is the purpose underlying it, which is perfection of faith and deeds. The Quran, accordingly, proceeds to give in a nutshell the Islamic teachings about these two subjects.

The literal translation of the clauses ولكن البر من آمن is, "but righteousness is one who believes" which is obviously incomplete. So some words must be understood here. According to Sībawaih, a great authority on Arabic syntax, the rules of the Arabic language sometimes permit the omitting of a word for the sake of brevity or for laying special stress or for affording greater elasticity in

speech. In accordance with this rule, the clause would read: ولكن البر من آمن i.e. "but righteousness is the righteousness of one who believes." Instances of such omissions of words are not lacking in the Arabic language (Sībawaih, i. 109).

According to yet another rule of the Arabic language, a مصدر (infinitive noun) is sometimes used in place of an اسم فاعل (active participle) in order to convey an intensified sense. Thus the word بر (righteousness) in the verse would mean بر الكامل i.e. "perfectly righteous or very righteous," and the clause would be translated as "perfectly righteous or very righteous is he who believes in Allah..."

The pronoun in the expression حبه (love of Him) may refer either to the word "Allah" in the previous clause, and in that case, the clause آتى المال على حبه would mean, "spends his money for love of God". Or it may refer to the word مال (money). In this case, the clause would mean, "spends his money notwithstanding his love for money". Lastly, it may also refer to the noun implied in the verb آتى i.e. the act of spending. In this case the clause would mean "spends his money for the love of spending it". All these meanings are correct and may be applied. Indeed, it is one of the inimitable beauties of the Quranic diction that it chooses words and constructions that go to convey a variety of meanings in the shortest of expressions.

The verse affords another example of this kind in the expression ابن السبيل (son of the road). As explained under

Important Words, this expression gives no less than four meanings and all are equally applicable here. So spending on ابن السبيل would signify (1) spending money in order to encourage travelling, which is a means of increasing knowledge and extending social relations; (2) helping such travellers as are on long journeys and are far away from home; (3) helping all wayfarers; and (4) helping such wayfarers and travellers as become stranded on the way. This is indeed a wonderful example of the combination of brevity and comprehensiveness. The verse also throws some light on the Islamic teaching about slavery. Islam prescribes it as a sign of true faith and perfect righteousness that money be spent on emancipating slaves. Nay, even such as are made captives from among those who attack Muslims with a view to annihilating them, are to be shown mercy and granted freedom out of money supplied by Muslims. For the discussion of Islamic teachings about slavery see 24:34.

The word الصابرين (the patient) in this verse is in the accusative case, while, according to the common rules of Arabic grammar, it should be in the nominative case like the preceding word الموفون (those who fulfil). The change is not without purpose and has been made to put emphasis on the word. According to Abū 'Alī, a well-known authority on Arabic syntax, when a sentence contains a number of nouns of praise or dispraise, it is considered idiomatic to vary their grammatical inflection (Muḥīṭ, part ii). This is done to intensify the meaning.

As pointed out in the beginning, this verse gives a gist of the teachings of Islam. It begins with the fundamental Islamic beliefs and doctrines which are the source and basis of all actions and on the rectitude of which depends the rectitude of one's actions. The most fundamental of these is belief in God Who is the central point of all faith. Second in importance is belief in the Last Day or the Day of Judgement, upon a real understanding of which depends the direction of man's actions in this life. Then follows belief in angels who serve as a sort of intermediaries between God and His creation. Then there are Divine Scriptures embodying God's revelation which point out the way to the attainment of His pleasure and the purification of man's soul. Lastly are Prophets who are the recipients of God's revelations, communicating to man the will of God and serving as models to be followed and imitated by him. These five objects of faith have been mentioned here in their natural order and not necessarily in order of importance.

After stating the fundamental objects of faith, the verse proceeds to mention some of the more important ordinances relating to man's actions. Pride of place is given to charity which a man gives not as a duty imposed on him, but as prompted by love, solicitude and sympathy for his kinsmen and fellow beings or out of love for common humanity. Next come the commandments regarding Prayer and Zakāh which help to establish a true connection between God and man on the one hand and

179. O ye who believe, <sup>a</sup>*equitable* retaliation in the matter of the slain is prescribed for you; the free man for the free man, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But if one is granted any remission by one's brother, then pursuing *the matter for the realization of the blood-money* shall be done with fairness and *the murderer* shall pay him the blood-money in a handsome manner. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. And whoso transgresses thereafter, for him there shall be a grievous punishment. <sup>185</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ  
فِي الْقَتْلِ ۖ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ  
وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ۖ فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ  
شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ  
بِإِحْسَانٍ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ  
وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَهُ  
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:195; 5:46.

regulate relations between man and man on the other. Finally are laid down the two bulwarks of character and morality, i.e. (1) the redemption of promises and pledges; and (2) the displaying of fortitude, patience and steadfastness in time of distress, the first-mentioned forming one of the bases of international morality and the latter the means of its perfection.

### 185. Important Words:

قصاص (retaliation) is derived from قص. They say قصه i.e. (1) he cut it (hair, etc.), or be clipped it; (2) he followed him closely or followed in his footsteps; and (3) he described or narrated it. قاص الرجل means, he did with the man the like of that which he

did to him; he retaliated on him for the wrong done to him. اقص الامير زيادا من بكر means, the Amir retaliated upon Bakr for the wrong he had done to Zaid. اقص therefore, means, retaliation, by slaying for slaying, and wounding for wounding, etc. (Aqrab) or the following up of a murder or an injury with a view to retaliating or punishing (Mufradât).

القتلى (the slain) is the plural of قتل in the sense of مقتول i.e. a murdered person (Aqrab).

الحر (freeman) is derived from حر meaning: (1) he was free-born; (2) he was of good and noble origin. حر الارض means, the best portion of land. Thus الحر means; (1) a freeman, opposite of

slave or captive; (2) a noble person; (3) the good and pure portion of a thing (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse comprises a very important principle of civil law, i.e. equality of man and necessity of awarding proportionate punishment to all offenders without distinction, unless an offender is forgiven by the relatives of his victim under circumstances that are expected to lead to improvement and betterment of conditions.

The words كَتَبَ عَلَيْكُمْ i.e. "is prescribed for you" show that retaliation for the slain is not simply permissible but is obligatory. Failure to inflict the punishment prescribed by Law on the offender would be tantamount to a violation of the commandment. The duty, however, of punishing the culprit does not devolve on the heirs of the murdered person but, as the plural number of the expression عَلَيْكُمْ (for you) shows, on the authorities responsible for the maintenance of law and order. But, as the singular number of the expression اخيه (one's brother) shows, the former have been given the option to forgive. The clause, therefore, means that on the one hand the concerned authorities are bound to punish the offender according to the requirements of law, having no right to pardon him of their own accord, and on the other hand the heirs of the murdered person are not entitled to take the law into their own hands and inflict the punishment on the guilty person themselves.

The verse under comment makes no distinction between different classes of persons in connection with the law of retaliation. The words used are of a general nature and apply to all offenders who might be guilty of murder, no matter of what rank or station in life or of what religion. Any person, irrespective of his caste or creed and irrespective of his station, must be put to death for the murder of any other person, unless pardoned by the relatives of the victim and unless the pardon has the sanction of the authorities. The sayings of the Holy Prophet are explicit on this point (Mājah, ch. on *Ḍiyāt*).

There is indeed a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that a Muslim should not be put to death for killing a disbeliever. But this saying, read in conjunction with several others bearing on the same subject and interpreted in the light of the relevant Quranic verses, forces us to the conclusion that the word "disbeliever" in the tradition referred to above is not general but means only a حربى كافر i.e. such disbeliever as belongs to a people who are at war with the Muslims or, in other words, one who is a member of a belligerent community. In fact, the Companions of the Holy Prophet are all agreed that a Muslim may be put to death for murdering a non-belligerent unbeliever (Ṭabarī, v. 44). The Holy Prophet himself ordered a Muslim murderer to be put to death for the murder of a non-belligerent non-Muslim (Qutnī).

The expression, *the freeman for the freeman and the slave for the slave*



and the female for the female, does not mean that a freeman should not be punished with death for the murder of a slave or that a woman should not be put to death for killing a member of the opposite sex, etc. The other verses of the Quran as well as the sayings and the practice of the Holy Prophet clearly establish the fact that the social position of a person or the sex of a party was never considered a bar to the application of this law. The peculiar construction, i.e. "the freeman for the freeman," etc. has been adopted here to refer to, and abolish, a custom of the Arabs whereby they used to take into consideration the sex and the social status of the murderer and the murdered person when determining punishment. If a man of high social position happened to kill a man of humble position, or if the slave of a great man killed that of a humble man, or if a lady of noble birth murdered a woman of humble origin, etc. the murderer was not punished with death, leniency being shown to him or her in sundry other ways as well. The commandment contained in this verse seeks to abolish that obnoxious custom of the Arabs and lays down in clear and unmistakable terms that no regard should be paid to the status of the murderer in the matter of retaliation.

In fact, the law of retaliation, as stated in this verse, is confined to the clause, *equitable retaliation in the matter of the slain is prescribed for you*, which forms a complete sentence in itself, giving a full and complete meaning. The ensuing expression, *the freeman for the*

*freeman and the slave for the slave and the female for the female*, is something extra, not forming part of the law. It only contains a repudiation of the Arab custom referred to above and illustrates, by giving three instances, how the law is to be administered. Such an expression is known as *جملة استينافيه* or *جملة مستأنفه* in Arabic grammar, and is technically introduced with a view to answering a question which is suggested by the preceding clause to which it is added without any intervening conjunction. The question answered in such an expression is often understood and not expressed (Mukhtaṣar).

The sayings of the Holy Prophet and his practice also support the above interpretation, for it is on record that he once ordered a woman to be put to death for murdering a man (Muslim), and on another occasion he commanded that a freeman be put to death for the murder of a slave. Says the Holy Prophet: "Whoever kills his slave shall be put to death" (Mājah). At another place he says: "The blood of all Muslims is alike in respect of the law of retaliation" (Nasā'ī).

The words, *if one is granted any remission by one's brother*, show that the infliction of capital punishment is not obligatory in all cases; for in special circumstances the murderer can be exempted from the extreme punishment by the heirs of the murdered person. Such exemption, which may be termed partial as the word *شيء* (any) indicates, means that the heirs of the deceased may renounce their right to have the

murderer put to death and may in place of that receive from him blood money. Or as the Holy Prophet has made it clear, the heirs may, in exceptional cases and with the sanction of the authorities, even grant full pardon, remitting blood-money as well (Musnad & Baihaqī).

It is worthy of note that where the Quran speaks of remission, it uses the word "brother" instead of "heir of the murdered person". This is to hint to the heir of the slain person that he should, as far as possible, take a lenient view of the offence. On the other band, the murderer is also enjoined to pay blood money with good grace and without undue delay.

The concluding clause, i.e. *whoso transgresses thereafter, for him there shall be a grievous punishment*, is meant to point to the fact that if, after the matter has been amicably settled and the murderer granted a remission by the heirs of the murdered person, the heirs should take it into their heads to wreak vengeance on the murderer by killing him, they will be shown no mercy and will get capital punishment. Says the Prophet: "I will allow no remission in case of one who kills the murderer after he has accepted blood money from him" (Jarīr).

The Islamic law of *قصاص* (retaliation), as briefly stated above, provides a very effective and practical means to put a stop to murder and safeguard human life. A man who shows a callous disregard for the life of a fellow person, loses his title to live as a member of human society. The option to pardon allowed to the heirs of the slain person should

not be regarded as likely to encourage murder, for such option is not synonymous with exemption from punishment, as in ordinary circumstances the murderer will have to pay the blood money. Moreover, the would-be murderer possesses no means to know that the heirs of the person whose murder he contemplates will actually be persuaded to pardon him; so the fear of capital punishment will always be there to deter him from the commission of the crime. Again, pardon or remission is permissible only where the circumstances are such that pardon or remission is likely to improve matters and bring about good results for all parties concerned (42:41). Thus, while on the one hand, Islam has made due provision for the suppression of crime, it has, on the other, kept open the door for the display of the noble qualities of benevolence and mercy.

The way in which the Quran has upheld the ultimate necessity of the death penalty is indeed most significant. At the time when the Quran was revealed, people exacted retaliation for an injury done to them with a vengeance. They were not satisfied even with inflicting capital punishment on the murderer, to say nothing of pardoning him. They needed no incentive to retaliation. They were already overdoing it. In fact, the Islamic law of retaliation, viewed in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time of its revelation, implied a prophecy that a time would come when people would go to the other extreme and a movement for the total abolition of

180. And there is life for you in *the law of retaliation*, O men of understanding, that you may enjoy security.<sup>186</sup>

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ يَا أُولِي  
الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

capital punishment would be set on foot. So the Omniscient God laid down the law of retaliation in a form that is indispensable for the preservation and protection of human life, as well as the promotion of harmony and goodwill.

To prevent crime, Islam really aims at eliminating the conditions that produce it. It seeks to remove the very root-cause of all crime by working a complete moral reformation in man. But it does not remain content with that. It also prescribes deterrent laws in conformity with the dictates of reason, justice and humanity. The fact that, despite efforts to the contrary, the death penalty is still found on the Statute Books of most countries in one form or another, constitutes a sufficient proof of the wisdom of the Islamic teaching. As a matter of fact, even the most enthusiastic protagonists of the abolition of capital punishment have not yet been able to suggest a suitable alternative to it. They have had to admit that a long term of imprisonment as an alternative is "horrible" and is "not an ideal substitute" (Capital Punishment in the Twentieth Century by E. Roy Calvert, G. P. Putnam, London, 1930). The law of retaliation still remains the most effective deterrent to crime and an essential method to satisfy the demands of justice; and the Islamic Law takes a further step

to bring about reconciliation between the offender and the aggrieved party.

### 186. Important Words:

الْبَاب (men of understanding). الْبَاب is the plural of لُب (lubb) which is derived from (labba) meaning, he was or became possessed of لُب i.e. understanding, intellect or intelligence. لُب لَبَّ means, he remained or dwelt in the place and kept to it. لُب اللوز means, he broke the almond and took out its kernel. لُب therefore, means: (1) the best and choicest part of anything; (2) kernel; (3) pith; (4) heart; (5) mind; (6) understanding, intellect and intelligence, because it is the choicest and best part of man; (7) the substance or essence of a thing (Lane). لُب is something higher and purer than عَقْل (understanding), being the brightest and best part of it (Mufradât). It appears that لُب is the name given to that quality in man which distinguishes him from other animals and makes him a rational being.

### Commentary:

This verse, small in size but great in weight, points to the wisdom underlying the law of retaliation. The words used are full of beauty of diction of the highest order. As قِصَاص means the killing of the murderer in retaliation of his act, the expression is like saying, "There is life for you in death, O men of understanding." How fearful the saying but how eternally

181. <sup>a</sup>It is prescribed for you, when death comes to any one of you, if he leave much wealth, that he make a will to parents and near relatives to act with fairness; *it is* an obligation on those who fear God.<sup>187</sup>

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا<sup>ج</sup> الْوَصِيَّةَ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ<sup>ح</sup>  
حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ<sup>ط</sup>

<sup>a</sup>4:12, 13, 177; 5:107.

true! In fact, no peaceful social life is possible without the awarding of swift capital punishment to those who consider human life to be of so little consequence.

The clause, *there is life for you in the law of retaliation*, has a wider significance also. For a long time Muslims suffered at the hands of disbelievers indignities, persecution and even death in patient silence. But, when the cup of the iniquities of the enemies of truth became full to overflowing, further continuation of the policy of non-resistance became tantamount to the demoralization of the victims and their national death. They were, therefore, enjoined to take up arms against the aggressors and pay the wicked people in their own coin. Indeed in the law of retaliation lies hidden the secret of individual and national life. You retaliate and you live; you refrain from retaliating and you die an ignoble death. Such is the eternal and inexorable law of nature which has been so beautifully expressed in the verse under comment.

The words, *O men of understanding*, have been used to make a direct appeal to that quality in man which makes him a rational

being and distinguishes him from other creatures. The Quran uses this expression whenever a strong appeal is to be made to man in his capacity as a rational being. God, as it were, says to men: "We have made you the noblest among Our creation and have bestowed on you the power of understanding and intelligence as We have bestowed it on none other. Will you not, therefore, be wise and try to understand things?"

### 187. Important Words:

خير (much wealth) means: (1) good as opposed to evil; (2) wealth acquired or collected by fair and praiseworthy means; (3) much wealth or abundance of wealth; (4) a thing that all desire; (5) welfare and good fortune (Mufradât); (6) the existence of a thing in abundance and perfection; (7) horses, etc. (Aqrab).

حق (obligation) is derived from حق and has been used in the verse in the accusative case, having something understood before it, the complete expression being حق ذلك حق (Kashshâf). الحق means: (1) equity or justice; (2) right mode of acting; (3) an obligation or a duty; (4) a debt or anything that is owed; (5) a thing

suitable to the requirements of justice, truth, duty, etc. (Lane). See also 2:148.

### **Commentary:**

As disputes about inheritance are a fruitful source of quarrels, murders, etc., the Quran here suitably turns from the subject of retaliation to that of inheritance.

The word used here for "wealth" is خَيْر and not مَال which is the ordinary word used in this sense. خَيْر means, "wealth acquired by fair and praiseworthy means". Thus by substituting the word خَيْر for مَال, the Quran has also emphasized the necessity of being very circumspect in the acquisition of wealth which should be acquired only by fair and lawful means. Incidentally, therefore, it has been hinted that it is not lawful for a Muslim to make a will with regard to property that has been acquired by unlawful means; for such wealth does not really belong to him.

In 4:12, 13 the Quran fixes the shares of all those persons who should succeed to a deceased person's property, according to the Islamic law of inheritance, and these in the first instance include parents, children, and wife or husband. In the presence of this law, the injunction given in the verse under comment would, at first sight, appear to be uncalled-for and unnecessary. As a matter of fact, those who believe in the abrogation theory, have actually declared this verse to be abrogated by the ones referred to above. But they are clearly mistaken; for the verse under comment makes an additional and necessary provision in regard to

inheritance. Not seldom there come forward claimants who allege that a deceased person had bequeathed such and such portion of his property to them, and even witnesses are not wanting to support their claims. The rightful heirs, not knowing anything about it, naturally suspect the claim. The result is quarrel and litigation. Every Muslim is, therefore, enjoined to make a proper bequest at the time of his death that his property be divided among his heirs, i.e. parents, children, wives, etc., according to the Law of Islam, stating therein also the portion of any other individual who is not legally entitled to inherit from him but to whom he may wish to bequeath some of his wealth. Such a declaration made with the knowledge of his heirs and relatives is calculated to put a stop to much litigation. Such a provision is all the more essential in cases when the property or wealth is considerable.

The verse also throws out a hint that a Muslim should, before his death, bequeath a part of his property, not exceeding one-third, to such of his relations as have been debarred by Law from inheriting from him, for instance, distant but deserving relations, non-Muslim parents, non-Muslim children and so on. In such a case the remaining two-thirds will go to his lawful heirs. As to the restriction relating to one-third, it may be noted that the Holy Prophet has made it clear that no testator can bequeath more than one-third of his wealth to others than the lawful heirs. At least two-thirds of the property must go to the heirs (Bukhārī).

Islam excludes non-Muslim

182. And he who alters it after he has heard it, the sin thereof shall surely lie on those who alter it. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, and All-Knowing.<sup>188</sup>

فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى  
الَّذِينَ يَبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

relatives from the category of heirs to avoid complications. For instance, the near relatives of a deceased person might belong to a people who are at war with the Muslims or in open hostility toward them. In that case, to put money into their hands would be to damage the cause of Islam and injure one's own interests. Non-Muslim relatives have, therefore, been excluded from lawful heirs so that they may not claim their part of the inheritance as of right. The Quran, however, instructs Muslims to leave to them a part of their property by a special will, so that, in case such property is not likely to be used against the interests of Islam, the former may in this way discharge the obligations they owe to the latter as kinsmen. Another reason for excluding non-Muslim relatives from the category of heirs is that generally non-Muslims do not in practice allow their Muslim relatives to succeed them as heirs. There is no sense, therefore, in allowing Muslim wealth to flow to non-Muslims where no such flow takes place the other way.

The verse serves yet another purpose. According to the Law of Islam, as generally accepted, the grandchild of a deceased Muslim is debarred from inheritance in case the former's father has predeceased the latter. The Quran, therefore, directs that a portion of the property may be

left by a special will by a dying Muslim for such of his relatives as are otherwise rightful heirs but cannot inherit owing to some of their near kinsmen having predeceased them.

The verse must not be understood to lend itself to the interpretation that the heirs whose portions have been definitely fixed by the Law, can be given more than their prescribed share. This is expressly forbidden by the Holy Prophet (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Waṣāyā*).

### 188. Commentary:

If a person makes a will in compliance with the above commandment, but his heirs, finding it to be prejudicial to their interests, alter it or hinder its execution, the blame and the responsibility for consequences will lie on those who tamper with the will and not on the maker of the will. Apparently, the verse seems to be superfluous; for what it says is obvious, i.e. the responsibility of any subsequent alteration cannot lie on the testator. But deeper consideration would show the futility of such an idea. In fact, the verse serves three important purposes. *Firstly*, it warns the testator that fear of any subsequent alteration should not deter him from making the will. *Secondly*, that he should act intelligently and cautiously and should try to foresee and forestall all

183. But whoso apprehends from a testator a partiality or a wrong, and makes peace between them (the parties affected), it shall be no sin for him. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving and Merciful.<sup>189</sup>

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُوَصٍّ جَفًّا أَوْ إِثْمًا  
فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

possible mischief by his heirs. *Thirdly*, the verse warns the heirs and their friends that any alteration made by them in the will will bring them under the wrath of God Who is All-Knowing.

### 189. Important Words:

جفّا (partiality) is the infinitive noun from جنف. They say جنف عن الطريق meaning, he deviated from the right path. جنف في وصيته means, he acted wrongfully in his will. جائف اهله means, he kept away from his family out of anger and not for a just cause. تجائف لاثم means, he inclined towards sin. So جنف means: (1) inclining to sin, etc. (2) deviating from the right course; (3) acting unjustly or wrongfully; (4) keeping away from rightful things (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

If someone should have reason to fear that the testator is showing undue favour to any particular person or party, or that he is acting contrary to Islamic Law, it would be no sin for him to bring about reconciliation between the parties concerned by removing the cause of displeasure or disagreement between the testator and his heirs and thereby having the will altered in accordance with the requirements of justice and Islamic

Law. The words, *it shall be no sin for him*, do not mean that such pious intervention is simply an act of negative virtue. The expression has been used lest, in view of what has been said in the preceding verse regarding the sinfulness of the act of alteration in a will, some overcautious people should hold aloof even when they see an unjust inclination on the part of the testator. The verse thus really means that such an interference, far from being an act of sin, is an act of virtue which is sure to draw God's mercy.

The concluding clause reminds the testator that God is Forgiving, so that if he mends his error, He will be pleased to forgive him. The declaration that God is Merciful, also serves as an inducement to other Muslims to intervene, if it is felt that the testator is unduly partial to one party, to the detriment of the other. In that case they should readily step in and set things right, for which God would give them an ample portion out of His mercy. Thus the word غفور (Most Forgiving) relates to such testators as return to the right course when reminded to do so, and the word رحيم (Merciful) relates to those persons who succeed in persuading the testator to revert to the path of rectitude and justice.

**R. 23.**

184. O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.<sup>190</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ  
كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾

**190. Important Words:**

صام (Fasting) is derived from صام meaning, he kept back or refrained from doing something; or he refrained from eating or drinking or talking or walking, etc. The Arabs say صامت الريح i.e. the wind became calm or motionless. فرس صائم means, a horse from which food has been withheld, or a horse which is confined to its manger and not made to walk or race. Thus صيام means: (1) keeping back or refraining from something; (2) refraining from eating and drinking, etc; and (3) formally refraining from eating, drinking, going in unto wives, etc. i.e. fasting from dawn till sunset as ordained by Islam. صائم is one who so refrains from food, etc. i.e. one who keeps a fast (Aqrab & Mufradât). An interesting feature of the Arabic language is revealed when we notice that the word صامت though derived from a different root, yet, owing to its having two root letters common with صيام gives a somewhat similar meaning, for, whereas صيام means, refraining from food, drink or speech, صامت means: (1) refraining from speech; and (2) intensity of thirst, the latter state being the direct result of refraining from drink (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

As the preceding verses contain a reference to patience in trials and

sacrifices as well as refraining from disputes and temptations, the Quran here fittingly turns to the subject of fasting, which is a most effective means of self-discipline.

The command to fast, whatever its details, is to be found in most religions in one form or another. The early devotions and fasting of Buddha (see Lalitavistara & Buddhacharita), the fasting of Moses, prior to his receiving the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9), the fasts of Jesus before his receiving the heavenly call (Matt. 4:2), all testify to the importance of this institution. In fact, fasting is a form of devotion and self-discipline which has a natural appeal to man. "By the greater number of religions," says the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "in the lower, middle and higher cultures alike, fasting is largely prescribed: and when it is not required, it is nevertheless practised to some extent by individuals in response to the promptings of nature." The verse under comment, however, does not mean that fasting has been prescribed for the Muslims in the same form in which it was prescribed for the people of earlier faiths. Islam has greatly spiritualised this institution by attaching to it a number of highly useful regulations and restrictions.



The clause, *so that you may become righteous*, explains the deep philosophy underlying the commandment relating to fasting. It is a special characteristic of the Quran that, whenever it gives an important commandment, it does not give it arbitrarily but also explains its usefulness so that the addressee may be convinced of, and satisfied about, the wisdom underlying it. The object of صيام or fasting has been stated in this verse as the attainment of تقوى i.e. righteousness.

As explained in 2:3 the word تقوى or اتقا from which the word تقون used in the present verse is derived means, to guard oneself against (1) harm and suffering, and (2) evil and sin. Thus the verse points out that the real object of fasting is, first, to be saved from harm and suffering, and secondly, to be saved from sin and evil.

The first object is attained through fasting in two ways: (1) When a man commits evil deeds and becomes deserving of God's punishment on account of those deeds, but later feels ashamed of them and turns to God in repentance, then fasting serves as an atonement for his sins. (2) Fasting not only makes a man fit and able to bear hardships but also makes him realize the sufferings of his brethren in distress and feel sympathy for them. Thus fasting goes a long way to remove and minimize the pains and sufferings of humanity.

The second object, viz., that of being saved from sin and evil, is attained through fasting because, while fasting, a person has not only to abandon eating and drinking but also,

to a certain extent, to keep himself aloof from worldly connections and to abstain from indulging in his desires, with the result that his thoughts naturally tend towards spiritual things. Spiritual men of all religions unanimously testify, on the basis of personal experience, that a certain degree of severance from physical relations and worldly connections is essential for spiritual advancement and has a powerful purifying effect on the mind. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that to carry such severance too far is sure to weaken the body to such an undesirable extent as to render a person unfit not only to fulfil his social and religious obligations but also to withstand temptations which requires a certain amount of strength. Islam, therefore, follows the path of the golden mean. While it does prescribe a certain degree of abstention from material pleasures, it does not permit such a weakening of the body as should incapacitate it for performing its normal functions. This is why the Holy Prophet has forbidden continuous fasting, saying, "Your self has a claim upon you and your family has a claim upon you and your guests have a claim upon you" (Tirmidhī). On another occasion, he is reported to have said, "Verily, I am the most righteous of you all, yet sometimes I fast and sometimes I abstain from fasting, and so must you do" (Bukhārī).

Fasting also stands as a symbol for complete sacrifice. One who fasts not only abstains from food and drink, which are the chief means of sustenance and without which one

185. *The prescribed fasting is for "a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation—the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.*<sup>191</sup>

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ  
مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ  
أُخْرٍ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ  
طَعَامٍ مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ  
خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۖ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

“2:204.

cannot live, but also from going in unto one's wife which is the means of assuring one's future race. Thus he who fasts really expresses his readiness, if need be, to sacrifice his all for the sake of truth. Fasting indeed affords a wonderful training ground for man.

It must also be noted here that this verse does not actually contain a command to fast, which follows in the verse coming after the succeeding verse. It only prepares Muslims for the coming commandment by saying that (1) the fasting which is going to be prescribed for them is not a new thing but was also prescribed for the people that had gone before, and that (2) it is a most useful thing which is sure to benefit them greatly. It will be seen that very often the Quran does not give a commandment all of a sudden but first prepares the ground for it by making some general remarks. In this connection see also

2:143-145 where a similar process has been adopted.

### 191. Important Words:

يطيقونه (are able to fast only with great difficulty) is derived from طاق. They say طاق الشيء or طاق الشيء meaning, he was able or fit to do it; or he had the strength and power to do it (Aqrab). But the word طاعة is not used of strength generally but of such strength only as, so to speak, lies on the border, i.e. just the strength with which a thing may be done and no more—a strength required to do a thing only with difficulty and trouble (Mufradāt & Lane). This is why the word طاعة is never used to express the power of God for which words like قدرة and قوة are used; for whereas the latter two words express the sense of vastness of power, the former expresses only that of its narrowness. The Quran uses the word طاعة only twice and at both these places it uses

it in a negative sentence, i.e. لَاطَاقَةُ لَنَا viz. "we do not even possess the requisite strength to do that" (2:250 & 287). Thus the correct rendering of the clause يطيقونه على الذين would be, "for those who are able to fast but can fast only with great difficulty." طَوَّقَهُ (*Ṭawwaqahū*) which is from the same root means, he put a collar or a neck-ring round his neck, i.e. he imposed on him a thing that was difficult, troublesome or inconvenient. طَاَقَهُ also means, a single strand which after combining with others goes to make a rope (Lane), i.e. the weak part of a rope which cannot stand tension alone.

فَدْيَةٍ (an expiation) is derived from فَدَى. They say فَدَى الرَّجُلُ meaning, the man secured his release from captivity, etc. by paying his ransom. Thus فَدْيَةٍ means, such payment as is made for obtaining release of a person; or such expenditure as is made in expiation of some sin or shortcoming, etc. (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse again refrains from giving the actual commandment regarding fasting but prepares further ground by pointing out that the fasting about to be prescribed is not meant for all days but only for a limited number of days. Again, the commandment to come is not meant to be observed in all circumstances; for those suffering from disease or those on a journey will be exempt from it. In fact, Islam is a practical religion. It does not give any commandment which is impossible of compliance. Hence, while referring to its injunctions about fasting, the Quran makes it clear that whosoever

is ill or is on a journey should not fast but should redeem the omission by fasting an equal number of days at some other time when the sickness is gone or the journey is over.

The pronoun الَّذِينَ (those) in the clause, *those who are able*, refers to believers in general, the words الَّذِينَ يطيقونه meaning, those who are able to fast but can fast only with great difficulty. This interpretation is supported by another reading of the verse in which the word يَطَوَّقُونَهُ (*yutawwaqūnahū*) has been substituted for يَطِيقُونَهُ (*yutīqūnahū*) (Jarīr), the former word meaning, those to whom fasting is like a tight collar, i.e. those who are not actually sick but whose physical condition or general health is such that they are unable to fast without running the risk of injuring their health. Such people, who include old men and raw youths and weakly persons and pregnant women and mothers giving suck to their children, may not fast but should make amends for their non-observance of each day's fast by feeding a poor man according to their standard of food. Another reading of the word يَطِيقُونَهُ is يَطِيقُونَ (*yutayyaqūnahū*) (Jarīr) meaning, they can do it only with great difficulty, which also bears out the above meaning. Thus the verse mentions three classes of believers to whom concession is allowed with respect to fasting: (1) the sick; (2) those on a journey; and (3) those neither on a journey nor actually sick but otherwise too weak to fast except with real risk to their health.

Some commentators do not recognize the last-mentioned class as

186. The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and <sup>a</sup>discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present *at home* in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, *shall fast* the same number of other days. <sup>b</sup>Allah desires *to give* you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number, and that <sup>c</sup>you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful.<sup>192</sup>

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ  
هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى  
وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ  
فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ  
فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ  
الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ  
وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا  
هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:186; 3:4; 8:42; 21:49; 25:2. <sup>b</sup>2:287; 5:7; 22:79. <sup>c</sup>22:38.

being separate from, and independent of, the first two, but take it as being an exception from them. In this case the verse would mean that such of the sick and of those on a journey as can afford to feed poor men should also do so, besides fasting the same number of days after the sickness or the state of journey is over.

### 192. Important Words:

رمضان (Ramadan) is the name given to the ninth month of the lunar year. The word is derived from the verb رمض. They say رمض النهار i.e. the day became intensely hot. رمض الرجل means, the man had his feet burnt by the earth which had become intensely heated by the sun. رمض الصائم means, his inside became very hot with thirst

owing to fasting. ارمض من الحزن means, he began to burn, i.e. he was greatly distressed, with grief and sorrow. الرمد means, the first rain of autumn which finds the earth hot and burning (Aqrab & Lane). The month of رمضان is so named because (1) fasting in this month causes heat and burning due to thirst; (2) worship and devotion in this month burns away the traces of sin in man, this signification being corroborated by a saying of the Holy Prophet ('Asākir and Merdawaih as quoted by Faṭḥul-Qadīr); and (3) its devotions produce in the heart of man the necessary warmth of love for his Creator and his fellow beings. The name رمضان is of Islamic origin, the former name of the month being ناطق

(Muḥīṭ & Māwardī, as quoted by Faṭḥul-Qadīr).

القرآن (the Quran) is the name given by God Himself to the Book revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam, containing the final Law for mankind. The word is derived from قرأ. They say قرأ الكتاب meaning: (1) he read the book, i.e. he read it to himself; or (2) he recited the book, i.e. he read it aloud so that others might hear it; قرأ also means, he conveyed or delivered a message, etc., as they say اقرأ عليه السلام meaning, convey or deliver my *salām* to him; (3) قرأ الشيء means, he collected or drew together the thing; (4) قرأت المرأة means, the woman became pregnant and brought forth a child (Aqrab & Lane). Thus قرآن (Quran) means: (1) a book which is meant to be read. The Quran is indeed the most widely read book in the world (Enc. Brit. 11th edition, article on Koran by Nöldeke); (2) a book or message which is meant to be conveyed and delivered to other peoples. The Quran is indeed the only revealed Book whose delivery or message is absolutely unrestricted; for whereas all other Books are meant for specific times and specific peoples, the Quran is meant for all times and all peoples (34:29; also Bukhārī); (3) a Book which comprises and has collected in itself all truth; the Quran is indeed a storehouse of knowledge which not only comprises all eternal truths revealed in previous Books (98:4) but also all such truths as mankind may stand in need of at any time and in any circumstances (18:50); (4) a Book which contains not only visible truth which may be seen and felt by

all but, like a pregnant woman big with child, it contains truths that lie hidden from the eyes of most men and, like a newborn child, come to light only as and when time ripens (15:22). All these meanings are not only expressive of an existing state of affairs but also serve as mighty prophecies, the truth of which has been established in all ages.

### Commentary:

The ground having been suitably prepared in the preceding two verses, this verse gives the awaited commandment about fasting. But even here the actual commandment is preceded by a suitable description of the month of Ramadan in which fasts were to be observed. The month was not chosen arbitrarily but was selected for the purpose of fasting because it was a sacred month in which the Quran was revealed. And the Quran is not an ordinary book. It is a Book full of right guidance and of bright Signs and of things that help to differentiate between truth and falsehood. This sublime foreword placed before the commandment about fasting contains an implied question to the effect: Will you not now fast when fasting is a tried thing, when it is so useful, when it is to be observed only for a few days, when even in these few days suitable facilities have been provided, and lastly when these few days correspond with a month which is full of blessings?

As hinted above, this verse mentions the reason for which the month of Ramadan was selected for the purpose of fasting. It was in this

month that the Quran was revealed. The revelation of the Quran in the month of Ramadan may mean two things: (1) that the revelation of the Holy Book commenced in the month of Ramadan, for it is on record that it was on the 24th of Ramadan that the Holy Prophet received his first revelation (Musnad & Jarīr); (2) that the revelation of the Quran was repeated to the Holy Prophet every year in the month of Ramadan, for it is also on record that the angel Gabriel rehearsed every year to the Holy Prophet the whole of the revealed portion of the Quran during this month and this he continued to do till the very year of the Prophet's death (Bukhārī, ch. on *Manāqib*). Thus in a way even the whole of the Quran may be said to have been sent down in Ramadan.

The words, *clear proofs of guidance and discrimination*, point out that the Quran is a Book which is not content with making mere assertions. It supports every assertion it makes with necessary reasons and arguments which are both clear and convincing, and it also adduces heavenly Signs which go to discriminate right from wrong with such clearness that they leave no room for doubt. This excellence belongs exclusively to the Quran. Indeed, other scriptures, too have been spoken of as "a light and guidance," but about none of them has it been said that they supply reasons, arguments and Signs in support of their assertions.

Although former Prophets also were given Signs that people might

accept them as Divine Messengers, yet the Scriptures they brought contained nothing that might bear testimony to their truth. It is only the Quran that contains all kinds of evidence—rational, scriptural and heavenly—to demonstrate the truth of its teachings so that it might itself furnish necessary evidence of its truth, and that, unlike other scriptures, tales and stories of the past might not form its sole support.

The clause, *let him fast therein*, signifies that it is necessary to fast all the days of the month of Ramadan; it will not do to fast only for a few days. Thus, out of every twelve months in the year, at least one—that of Ramadan—must be so devoted to the worship of God.

The clause, *whoso is sick or is on a journey, he shall fast the same number of other days*, at first appears to be an unnecessary repetition of what has already been said in the preceding verse in identical words, but really it is not so; for whereas in the previous verse this clause formed part of a verse that was meant to prepare the ground for the commandment to fast, in this verse it forms part of the actual commandment. The clause signifies that if in the month of Ramadan one happens to be sick or is on a journey, one should not fast, owing to the extra hardship entailed, but should fast the same number of other days when one has recovered from sickness or when the journey is over. The Quran, however, wisely refrains from defining the terms "sickness" and "journey," leaving them to be

defined by the common usage of the people.

The clause, *He desires not hardship for you*, points to the very important principle that divine commands are not meant to cause trouble or inconvenience but to afford ease and facility. In this connection it may well be noted that St. Paul looks upon the Law as an entanglement with "the yoke of bondage" if not as an actual curse (Gal. chs. 3 & 5). But he forgets that true freedom, and for that matter, true happiness lie only in willing obedience to a good and righteous legislation. The Islamic law, even "in meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances," is a real help and guidance rather than a hindrance and a bondage.

The clause, *so that you may complete the number*, indicates that God's purpose in prescribing a fixed number of days is that believers may be able to complete the number which, in His sight, is essential for their spiritual welfare. A fixed number was essential; for, otherwise, some people might have failed to fast even the minimum number, while others would have unduly suffered for doubt as to their having completed the necessary number even after they had long exceeded it.

The clause, *that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you*, points to yet another object underlying the commandment. All such expressions in which the offering of a particular praise to God is enjoined signify two things: (1) that man being God's creation should continuously offer praise to Him,

invoking the particular divine attribute that may suit the occasion; (2) that he should also try to reflect in his person the selfsame attribute of God. "Exalting God" would therefore mean not only God's glorification but the uplift and exaltation of the devotee himself. In fact God stands in need of no praise. He is what He is whether we praise Him or not. So truly speaking, everything is for the benefit of man himself, and the benefit underlying fasting is the exaltation of man, morally and spiritually and, in a sense, physically as well.

The final clause, *that you may be grateful*, is also full of deep meaning. God is not cruel or unkind; He has due regard for our weaknesses and He does not put us to unnecessary trouble; and whatever seeming trouble He puts us to is for our own good. This kind and loving attitude of God towards us ought to give rise to a corresponding feeling of love for Him in our hearts and we ought to feel grateful to Him for His love and kindness.

To a superficial observer the language of the Quran as used in this verse might appear to be rather unconnected, forming independent clauses. But a closer study reveals a beautiful arrangement between them. In fact the four clauses in the concluding portion of this verse furnish reasons for the four commandments contained in the first portion of the verse, the succeeding reasons following the reversed order of the preceding commandments in a most natural manner. The first reason

187. And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: "I am near.<sup>a</sup> I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.<sup>193</sup>

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ  
أَجِيبْ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ  
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِلَعَلِّهِمْ  
يُرْشَدُونَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>11:62; 34:51; 50:17. <sup>b</sup>27:63.

given by the verse is contained in the clause, *Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship for you*. Though the apparent wording of this clause is different from the wordings of the succeeding clauses, actually it is also one of those that supply a reason, for in reality the clause stands like this, "that you be afforded facility, etc." Corresponding to this clause we have the last commandment of the verse, i.e. *whoso is sick or is on a journey*, etc. The second clause supplying a reason is, *that you may complete the number*, corresponding to which we have the commandment, *whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him fast therein*, hinting that God means the Muslims to fast the whole month. The third clause supplying a reason is, *that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you*. Corresponding to this we have the words, *a guidance for mankind*, etc. Finally comes the clause, *that you may be grateful*, corresponding to which we have the clause, *the month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was sent down*, hinting that the wise God has chosen the most sacred and the most blessed part of the year for fasting so that you may be doubly benefited by it. Such

figure of speech in which parts of a sentence correspond with others occurring in the same sentence in a reverse order, the first clause of the former group corresponding with the last clause of the latter, is known in Arabic rhetoric as *لف و نشر معكوس* (Muṭawwal).

### 193. Important Words:

اجيب (I answer) and فليستجيبوا (they should hearken) are both derived from the same root جاب meaning, he cut a cloth, etc. اجابه means, he answered him or answered his question. اجابت الارض means, the earth brought forth its vegetation, i.e. responded to sowing. استجابه means, he answered him or responded to him. استجاب له means, he obeyed him or complied with his wish and did what he was asked to do (Aqrab & Lane).

يرشدون (may follow the right way) is derived from رشد meaning, he was rightly guided and became steadfast in his guidance; he took or followed the right way. رشد (rushd) and رشد (rashad) and رشاد mean, true guidance; following the right way with firmness and steadfastness; rectitude; maturity of intellect. رشيد and راشد mean, one who is rightly guided, one who takes or follows the right way. رشيد is more



intensive of the two and is also applied to God when it means, "Director to the right way; One Who follows a perfect course in His decrees" (Aqrab & Lane).

### **Commentary:**

When the Faithful came to know of the blessings of the month of Ramadan and of fasting therein, they naturally became eager to derive as much benefit from it as possible and asked the Holy Prophet as to the particular attitude of God in this month, i.e. whether He came nearer to His servants in respect of grace and mercy, and whether He accepted more prayers in Ramadan and so on. The verse provides an answer to this question.

The words, *My servants*, do not obviously refer to all people but to only such men as believe in God and are willing to obey Him, particularly Muslims who follow His commandments regarding Prayers, Fasting, etc. In fact atheists or, for that matter, rebellious people are never spoken of as "My servants" in the Quran.

The clause, *I am near*, does not, and indeed cannot, refer to bodily nearness. The preceding verses told us that the command to fast was given with a view to purifying us, and that in giving it God desired our own welfare and meant no torture. The conception of such a loving God naturally creates the desire in the minds of all men to attain spiritual nearness to Him. Hence the present verse contains the glad tidings that access to God is not beyond human power nor is His nearness the

monopoly of any particular people. The attainment of union with Him is within the reach of every man and woman, and the door of His mercy and grace is also open to all.

The words, *I answer the prayers of the supplicant*, point to the fact that it is not only the true believers and the righteous who have their prayers accepted by God but that God hears and accepts the prayers of all. As a matter of fact, the acceptance of prayer is an expression of God's grace and mercy which encompass Muslims as well as non-Muslims. It would be unjust to think that God, Who is "the Lord of the worlds," accepts the prayers of Muslims alone. It is natural, however, that He should show greater favour to those who obey Him and hold fast to truth and act righteously. He therefore listens more to their prayers than to those of others, and He certainly rejects such prayers as are offered against His beloved ones. Nor does He accept such prayers as may lead to results that are detrimental to the cause of truth. But He is the Lord of all and listens to all.

The clause, *so they should hearken to Me*, means that they should believe in God (for without believing there can be no hearkening, and no response to His calls) and obey Him. God promises acceptance of prayers to "His servants" but He also expects that His creatures should believe in Him and obey His commandments. This will make their prayers all the more entitled to acceptance.

The words, *and believe in Me*, do not here refer to a belief in the

existence of God; for this idea is included in the preceding clause, *they should hearken to Me*, it being impossible that one should hearken to God and obey His commandments without believing in His existence. The words, *believe in Me*, therefore refer here to belief in the power of God to accept prayers and belief in the fact that if appealed to, He will certainly come to our help.

The final clause, *that they may follow the right way*, means that if men would act upon the guidance contained in this commandment they would (1) attain God's nearness, and (2) find God inclined to accept their prayers more and more.

But as with all other things, there are limitations and conditions attached to the acceptance of prayers also, to some of which the verse under comment refers. They may be briefly stated as follows:

(1) One should be a servant of God, accepting His dominion over him and worshipping Him, alone, as the words, *My servants*, indicate.

(2) One should call on God alone for help and turn to no other being or thing opposed to Him, as the words, *when he prays to Me*, show. There are indeed many who, while seemingly praying to God, put their real trust in other things or sometimes even turn to false deities for help. Such men cannot expect their prayers to be accepted.

(3) One should hearken to God's call, i.e. not only believe in Him but also obey His commandments, accepting His Messengers and acting righteously in accordance with His

Law, as the words, *hearken to Me*, point out.

(4) One should have firm belief in the fact that God not only has the power to accept one's prayers but would actually accept them if one could only persist in asking, as the words, *believe in Me*, signify. There are indeed many who pray for a time and then get tired of it. These really do not believe; for if they had believed, they would willingly have waited. Says the Holy Prophet: "God would accept one's prayer if only one did not show impatience, by saying, 'I have prayed and I have not been answered' " (Muslim).

(5) The prayers of those who are rebellious against God, rejecting His commandments and opposing His will, are not accepted, particularly such prayers in which something against His will or something likely to injure the cause of His beloved ones is solicited. Says God: "The prayer of the rebellious ones is nothing but wasted" (40:51).

A saying of the Holy Prophet very beautifully explains the philosophy of prayer. He is reported to have said: "Every Muslim who prays to God and whose prayer does not consist in anything which is a sin, i.e. anything against God's will or against His commandments or against His way, or anything which involves an injustice or unkindness to a relative, will have his prayer accepted. But the acceptance of prayer may take three forms: (a) either God will grant to the supplicant his request in this very life; or (b) He will store the thing for

188. It is made lawful for you to go in unto your wives on the night of the fast. They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them. Allah knows that you have been acting unjustly to yourselves, wherefore He has turned to you with mercy and afforded you relief. So you may now go in unto them and seek what Allah has ordained for you; and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn. Then complete the fast till nightfall and do not go in unto them while you remain in the mosques for devotion. These are the limits fixed by Allah, so approach them not. Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to men that they may become secure against evil.<sup>194</sup>

أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ ۖ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۚ فَالْزِنْ بِأَشْرَوْهِنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مِمَّا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۖ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۚ ثُمَّ أَتِمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَجِدِ ۚ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

him in the next; or (c) He will ward off a like evil from him" (Bukhārī).

The Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement says: "God treats His servants like friends. A friend would sometimes accept the request of his friend and would sometimes expect him to accept his will. So does God. But even when God seemingly rejects the prayer of a believer, He is very often acting in his interests" (Ḥaḳīqat, p. 19).

#### 194. Important Words:

هَفَثَ (going in unto) has a number of meanings: amatory talk, kissing, caressing, embracing, compressing, coition, etc.; in fact, everything that a man desires of his wife. When هَفَثَ is followed by the preposition إِلَى it means, coition or going in unto one's wife, and it is in this sense that the word has been used here. هَفَثَ also means, immodest, foul and lewd talk or speech (Lane).

تختانون (you have been acting unjustly) is derived from خان. They say خانه i.e. he acted unfaithfully or perfidiously towards him; he was not faithful to the trust reposed in him. اختانه is like خانه, giving the same meaning. It also means, he acted wrongfully or unjustly towards him. The Arabs say خاتنه رجلاه i.e. his feet or legs acted unfaithfully towards him, meaning he was unable to walk. تختانون would, therefore, mean, you failed to give your souls (i.e. yourselves) their due either (1) by preventing them from their duty to God, or (2) by refusing them the satisfaction of their natural and lawful cravings. The former act is a sin, while the latter, though not a sin, may endanger one's health or deprive one of just happiness. The word has been used in both these senses in the Quran. In 4:108, it has been used in the sense of "sin", while in the present verse it has been used in the sense of "depriving the soul of the gratification of its natural and just desires".

عفا عنكم (afforded you relief). The word عفا gives a number of meanings (see 2:53). The expression عفا الله عن فلان is sometimes used where there is no question of pardoning any sin or obliterating traces thereof but simply in the sense of removing one's mistake or misunderstanding or improving one's condition or bestowing honour on one (Aqrab). It also means, making things easy, i.e. affording relief (Muḥīt).

بأشروهن (go in unto them) is derived from بشر from which is also derived the word بشاره or بشرى meaning, glad

tidings. The expression بشره means, he became glad and happy because of that. The words بشر الجلد mean, he removed or peeled off its skin. البشرة means, outer part of skin, or what is visible of the face or body. بأشرا المرأة means, he came in contact with his wife skin to skin; he went in unto her. البشرى (glad tidings) is so called because it changes the colour of the listener's face. البشر (man) is also so called because, unlike other animals, man's skin is visible and not concealed under hair (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

### Commentary:

It was a custom among the Israelites to abstain from all kinds of food from one evening to the other on the occasion of the fast of the Atonement Day, the only fast prescribed by Moses for his people. When fasts were first prescribed for Muslims, and details had not yet been revealed, they thought that, like the Jews, they too would have to fast for 24 hours with a slight intervening breakfast. Hence, following their own judgement, they concluded that it was lawful for them to eat and drink and to go in unto their wives only as long as they did not go to bed, and that after they had gone to sleep, they were not allowed to partake of any food or drink or to go in unto their wives until the next evening. Bukhārī gives the following tradition on the authority of Barā': "When the command to fast was revealed, if anybody kept a fast and then went to sleep in the evening, he abstained from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse until the time for breaking

the fast the following day" (Bukhārī ch. on *Ṣaum*). This tradition and others of the same import show that it was not in obedience to any command from God or the Holy Prophet that his Companions abstained from sexual intercourse after going to bed at night, but it was owing to their own imitation of similar customs among the People of the Book that they had imposed these restrictions on themselves. As, however, these restrictions were against the will of God, a revelation was soon sent down allowing the Faithful to eat and drink and approach their wives as they liked during the night; only they were forbidden to do so while fasting during the day.

Some commentators have inferred from the words, *you have been acting unjustly to yourselves*, that the Companions of the Holy Prophet were unable to act upon the commandment to abstain from intercourse with their wives during the nights of fasts and frequently broke it. But this is evidently wrong, for the good reason that there was no such commandment to be broken. Moreover, the words of the Quran, i.e. *you may now go in*, also belie this interpretation, for the use of the word "now" clearly indicates that the Companions of the Holy Prophet were erring not on the side of indulgence but on that of abstinence. The Quran could not obviously say, *you may now go in*, to a people who were already going in unto their wives.

The clause, *they are a garment for you and you are a garment for them*, very beautifully describes the object

of marriage. The verse points out that the object of marriage is not the gratification of carnal passions. The real object is the comfort, protection and embellishment of the parties, for such are the uses of a garment as explained in 7:27 & 16:82. Thus in a very few words, the Quran has described the true relationship that should exist between husband and wife, a description which has hardly a parallel in any other scripture.

The clause, *the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread of the dawn*, does not refer to the thread made of yarn but to the streak of light that appears along the eastern horizon at the time of dawn. The verse enjoins that from dawn till sunset Muslims should abstain from food and drink and intercourse while fasting. But they are free to have recourse to these things between sunset and dawn. At places where days and nights are unusually long, i.e. nearer the poles, calculation should be made for the purpose of fasting on the basis of average conditions, i.e. in such a case day and night would each be supposed to be of twelve hours' duration (Muslim, ch. on *Ashrātūs-Sā'at*). The clause, *while you remain in the mosques for devotion*, refers to the practice of *اعتكاف* which is observed by remaining in the mosque, night and day, during the last ten days of Ramadan. During these days, the devotee who decides to observe *اعتكاف* is not to leave the mosque except from human necessity, i.e. to answer a call of nature, etc. He enters the mosque on the morning of the 20th of Ramadan

189. And <sup>a</sup>do not devour your wealth among yourselves through falsehood, and offer it not *as bribe* to the authorities that you may knowingly devour a part of the wealth of *other* people with injustice.<sup>195</sup>

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ  
وَتُدْءُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ تَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا  
مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ  
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٩﴾

<sup>٢٣</sup>  
ع  
٧

<sup>a</sup>4:30, 162; 9:34.

and abides therein till the end of the month, fasting from daybreak to sunset and occupying himself in prayer or recitation of the Quran or other religious study or meditation. During اعتكاف (*I'tikāf*), which is, as it were, the consummation of the spirit of fasting, intercourse with wives and preliminaries thereto are not allowed even at night time. The clause, *these are the limits fixed by Allah, so approach them not*, points to the very important principle that a man can attain true piety only if he refrains from even "approaching" the things that have been forbidden by God. "Some acts," says the Holy Prophet "are of doubtful character, one not knowing whether they are right or wrong. It is always better to avoid these. The forbidden things are like a pasture-land which the Wise God prohibits to the people. If you make your beasts graze on the borders of such land, i.e. allow your beasts to approach near them, there is danger of their trespassing upon the prohibited area" (Bukhārī, ch, on *Īmān*). This is an extremely wise injunction which cuts at the root of all trespass. Only those can protect themselves against sin who give all

unlawful things a wide berth. The final clause, *that they may become secure against evil*, repeats the idea contained in 2:184 in which the subject of fasting was first introduced. In both verses the underlying object of fasting has been stated to be the attainment of تقوى i.e. piety, righteousness and protection against evil, which are all different forms of divine blessings. The reader may, with advantage, compare this idea with the belief of the Christians that the Law is a curse (Gal. 3:10, 13).

### 195. Important Words:

تدأوا (offer it) is derived from ادأى which again is derived from دأى. They say دأى الدلو, he let down the bucket (into the well), or he pulled it up. ادأى means, he let down the bucket (into the well.) ادأى الىه بهمال means, he offered or gave him money (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

The commandment relating to fasting enjoined Muslims to refrain from lawful eating and drinking within specified periods with a view to attaining piety and righteousness. This was thus the most opportune time to remind the people that unlawful eating, i.e. unlawful acquisition of wealth, must be all the

**R. 24.**

190. They ask thee about the new moons. Say, <sup>a</sup>“They are means for measuring time for *the general good of mankind* and for the Pilgrimage.’ And it is not righteousness that you come into houses by the backs

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ  
لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا  
الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ  
اتَّقَى وَآتَى الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا

<sup>a</sup>2:198; 9:36.

more scrupulously avoided. Indeed, one of the greatest evils prevailing in the world is the practice of devouring other men's property by means of falsehood, fraud and litigation. Many a sin is nothing but an offshoot of this evil. Islam condemns the practice of taking another man's property without his knowledge or consent. Similarly, it is unlawful to appropriate another person's possessions by means of false litigation. If a man takes possession of a property that does not belong to him by right, it will prove the ruin of him, even if a court of justice should decree the property as his. Says the Holy Prophet: "Beware! I am but a man like you and it sometimes happens that a litigant comes to me and he is more eloquent than his opponent, and I, after listening to his arguments, may give my decision in his favour. But if the property is really not his, my decision will not make it his in the sight of God; in that case it is nothing but a piece of burning fire; so let him put this fire into his belly if he likes, or let him leave it" (Bukhārī).

The verse cuts at the root of the evil that has made its appearance in the

present age even among those who lay claim to culture and enlightenment. People generally do not deem it worthwhile to consider what right is. All that is seen is how the judge decides. When a judge awards a property to a man, he eagerly takes possession of it without the slightest compunction, even if it happens not to belong to him by right. It never occurs to him that in the sight of God he is no less a usurper than he who forcibly seizes another man's property.

Incidentally the verse also forcefully condemns the practice of the giving and taking of bribe which unfortunately is so rampant nowadays. In many countries justice has actually to be bought. What is still worse is that through this evil practice, the door of justice is often closed to a rightful owner. The practice is to be found even in some advanced Western countries and is said to be prevalent in certain parts of the New World. The Holy Prophet has condemned it in the strongest of terms saying: "The taker and giver of a bribe are alike, and both stand accursed" (Tirmidhī).

thereof; but <sup>a</sup>truly righteous is he who fears God. And you should come into houses by the doors thereof; and fear Allah that you may prosper.<sup>196</sup>

اللَّهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:178.

### 196. Important Words:

الاهلة (new moons) is the plural of الهلال i.e. the new moon. The word is generally used about the moon of the first two or three nights. About the moon of other nights the word used is قمر (Aqrab).

مواقيت (means for measuring time) is the plural of ميقات which is derived from وقت i.e. time. ميقات means: (1) time; (2) time fixed or appointed for a certain thing; (3) a promise for which a time is fixed; (4) a place in which a meeting is appointed to take place at a particular time (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

When the Companions of the Holy Prophet heard of the great blessings of the month of Ramadan, they naturally desired to know the blessings attending other months. This question on their part shows how solicitous they were to win God's blessings and attain His nearness.

The clause, *they are means for measuring time*, should not give rise to the misunderstanding that Islam looks upon the moon only as a means of measuring time; for elsewhere the Quran speaks of the sun also as such (6:97 and 17:13). In fact, Islam has made use of both the lunar and solar systems for measuring time. Where worship is to be performed in

different parts of the day, the solar system of reckoning time is used, as in the five daily Prayers or for the opening and the closing of a daily fast; and where worship is to be connected with a particular month or part thereof, the lunar system is used, as in selecting the month of fasting or the appointment of the time of Pilgrimage, etc. As a matter of fact, as religious commandments are meant for the general public, the system used is always such as may be easily understandable by the common people. All commandments relating to a fixed time are therefore based on the visible part of the solar or the lunar system of reckoning time, as the case may be. Changes in the position of the sun during the day are visible but the beginning of a solar month is not visible. On the other hand, the appearance of a new moon in the beginning of a lunar month is visible. Therefore Islam has made use of both; and the solar system is as much Islamic as the lunar system.

The clause, *and it is not righteousness that you come into houses by the backs thereof*, points to a very important principle that the real purpose in appointing different acts of worship is the intrinsic usefulness thereof and not that to each change of time there should be



191. And "fight in the cause of Allāh against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.<sup>197</sup>

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ  
وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٩١﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:76; 8:40; 9:13; 22:40; 60:9, 10.

attached an act of worship. Therefore the question, resulting from the over-eagerness of the Faithful, that, like fasting, there may be prescribed other acts of worship relating to other months also, was like approaching a house not through its door but by "the back thereof". The primary thing was worship and time was only secondary, but those who put the question wanted to make time primary and worship merely secondary. This was like putting the cart before the horse.

The clause also means that one should adopt the right course to attain an object. Every end can be attained by having recourse to certain means. Similarly, certain ways have been prescribed by God for winning His pleasure and attaining His nearness. People should faithfully stick to these and not devise ways of their own. By doing so, they will only suffer trouble, and gain nothing.

It is also on record that it was the practice among the idolaters of Arabia that when they left their homes and started on Pilgrimage to Mecca, then if for some purpose or object they had to come back to their houses, they did not enter them by their doors, but climbed into them by their back walls (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*). Islam does not approve of such meaningless practices.

### 197. Important Words:

سبيل الله (the cause of Allah) literally means, "the way of Allah". Anything done to remove the obstacles hindering people from approaching God or accepting His religion is termed *في سبيل الله* i.e. in the cause of Allah; also anything done to further the cause of Allah or any act performed in compliance with God's commandment. Thus holy wars, missionary campaigns, Pilgrimage, search of knowledge, etc. in fact anything done to further the cause of goodness and virtue as commanded by God is *في سبيل الله*.

### Commentary:

The subject relating to the attainment of virtue and piety and the incidental mention of Pilgrimage naturally diverts one's attention to the obstacles that were being placed in the way of Muslims by disbelievers who were making them victims of all sorts of wrongs and even prevented them from approaching their *Qiblah* in Mecca. The Quran, therefore, fittingly turns here to the subject of religious wars.

The verse contains the gist of the conditions which should regulate a religious war and which were made binding on Muslims. The conditions mentioned in this verse are four in number:

192. And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for <sup>a</sup>persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not *in, and* near, the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers.<sup>198</sup>

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ  
وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ  
وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا  
تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى  
يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَتَلُوكُمْ  
فَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:218.

(1) Such a war should truly be في سبيل الله i.e. undertaken with the object of removing obstacles placed in the way of God and His religion. Any war that is not في سبيل الله is not a lawful, religious war.

(2) Such war is allowed only against those who first take up arms against Muslims as the words. الذين يقاتلونكم (*those who fight against you*), indicate.

(3) Great care should be taken that women, children and old men of the belligerent nation who do not take actual part in the war against Islam are spared, for religious war is allowed only against *those who fight against you*. If, however, an old man or a woman takes actual part in the fighting, the responsibility lies on him or her and in such a case he or she loses the concession. Says the Holy Prophet: "Do not kill an old man or a child or a woman, and always try to improve things and reform matters and act kindly towards others, for Allah loves those who act kindly" (Dāwūd).

(4) Muslims should bring the war to

an end as soon as the enemy desists from fighting, for in this case further fighting is not permissible, as the words لا تعتدوا i.e. *do not transgress; surely Allah loves not the transgressors*, clearly prove. What a just and noble teaching and how tersely and beautifully expressed!

### 198. Important Words:

ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ (you met them) is derived from ثَقَفَ. They say ثَقَفَهُ i.e. (1) he faced him or he met him; (2) he caught hold of him; (3) he got the better of him (Aqrab).

فِتْنَةٌ (persecution) is derived from فَنَنَ. They say فَنَنَ فُلَانًا i.e. he led him astray; he tried or tested him. The expression فَنَنَ فُلَانًا عَنْ رَأْيِهِ means, he prevented him from holding his views. The words فَنَنَ الصَّائِغَ الذَّهَبِ mean, the goldsmith melted the gold in the crucible to ascertain its genuineness. فَنَنَهُ means, he put him in a state of trial or persecution. Thus فِتْنَةٌ means: (1) trial; (2) torture and persecution; (3) divergence of views among men and the disputes and fighting that take place as a result thereof (Aqrab). See also 2:103.

193. But <sup>a</sup>if they desist, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful. <sup>199</sup>

فَإِنْ اٰتٰهُمُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٩٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>8:40.

### Commentary:

The verse relates to conditions when a war has actually broken out. Obviously it does not apply to all disbelievers, for it only says, "*kill them*" and not "*kill the disbelievers*". The pronoun "*them*" clearly refers to, *those who fight against you*, as mentioned in the previous verse. The verse calls upon Muslims to fight against only such disbelievers as take up arms against them. It does not call upon them to slay each and every disbeliever that may happen to come in their way. Indeed this verse affords a remarkable instance of the way in which the plain words of the Quran are generally distorted by the opponents of Islam.

The clause, *and drive them out from where they have driven you out*, refers to the time when the enemies of Islam compelled the Holy Prophet and his Companions to flee from Mecca. It enjoins Muslims to bear in mind that they have eventually to conquer Mecca which being the centre and the most sacred place of Islam, no non-Muslim would be allowed to remain in it.

The clause, *persecution is worse than killing*, provides an argument in support of defensive war. The disbelievers were persecuting Muslims in diverse ways with a view to turning them away from their faith and they were also creating disorder in the land. It was certainly better to

put a stop to this state of affairs by fighting against the aggressors than to allow it to continue. There are circumstances when, to every right-thinking man, war becomes necessary.

The words *فتنة* (persecution) and *قتل* (killing) may be interpreted in another way also. *فتنة* means, "persecution or war waged against a people with a view to turning them from their faith", and *قتل* means, "an ordinary secular war". Now the verse points out that a war of religious persecution is worse than an ordinary war; for, *firstly*, worldly interests are nothing as compared with matters of faith; and *secondly*, wars caused by religious differences are more bitter and cruel, and seldom come to an end.

The clause, *and fight them not in and near the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein*, contains a very important principle. Even after the declaration of war, there are restrictions to be observed, and Muslims should never be the first to break them. The sanctity of the holy precincts of the Ka'bah must be safeguarded even in time of war. If, however, the other party violates its sanctity, Muslims may retaliate so that the attacking party may thereby be brought to its senses.

### 199. Commentary:

The verse speaks of the great clemency of Islamic teaching. Even after the disbelievers have inflicted

194. And <sup>a</sup>fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is *professed* for Allah. But if they desist, then *remember* that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.<sup>200</sup>

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ  
الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۖ فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ  
إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>8:40; See 2:191.

diverse torments on Muslims, turning them out of their homes and making their lives miserable and creating chaos and disorder in the land, they are to be forgiven and treated mercifully if they desist from fighting. Nay, God even promises them His forgiveness and mercy if they so desist.

### 200. Important Words:

الدين (religion) has a number of meanings including (1) religion; (2) rule and government (Aqrah). See also 1:4.

عدا (hostility) is derived from عدا. They say عدا meaning, he passed beyond it. The expression عدا عليه means, he acted wrongfully towards him or he exceeded the proper limit against him. The words عدا mean, he treated him with enmity and hostility. Thus عدوان means: (1) hostility; (2) wrongful conduct; (3) punishment for wrongful conduct and; (4) approach or way to a person by way of justification or excuse against him (Munjid, Mufradāt & Lane).

### Commentary:

This verse is often quoted by the opponents of Islam in support of their allegation that the Quran inculcates the carrying-on of war against unbelievers until all traces of false

religions are wiped out and the whole world embraces Islam. But such a view is clearly wrong. The word which throws light on the true significance of this verse is فِتْنَةٌ (persecution) which, as has been explained in the preceding verse, means religious persecution. This verse therefore enjoins Muslims to fight only till persecution for religion is over. It is on record that during the war between Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Abdullāh, son of ‘Umar, was once asked why he did not take part in the war when the Quran enjoined the Muslims to fight to put an end to فِتْنَةٌ. He replied: "We did indeed act upon this injunction of the Quran when in the time of the Holy Prophet the number of Muslims was small and a man was subjected to فِتْنَةٌ i.e. persecution for his religious beliefs, being either put to death outright or tortured, until at last Islam spread and the فِتْنَةٌ was over" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*). These words of ‘Abdullāh, son of ‘Umar, leave no doubt that the word فِتْنَةٌ in this verse means persecution for religious beliefs and nothing else. Muslims are enjoined to fight until there is no فِتْنَةٌ i.e. no persecution for religious beliefs.

The words that follow, i.e. *and*

195. *"The violation of a Sacred Month should be retaliated in the Sacred Month; and for all sacred things there is the law of retaliation. So, whoso transgresses against you, punish him for his transgression to the extent to which he has transgressed against you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him."*<sup>201</sup>

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ  
وَالْحُرُمَتُ قِصَاصٌ ۖ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى  
عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى  
عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:179.

*religion is professed for Allah*, would, therefore, mean that Muslims should fight till profession of a faith is not influenced by the fear of men, but that whatever religion a man follows, he should follow it only for the sake of God, and not out of the fear of men. The above interpretation is also borne out by the fact that the Holy Prophet entered into a number of treaties of peace with disbelievers, which could have no justification if the divine commandment had been to continue fighting until all embraced Islam. The object of the jihad or holy war which the Holy Prophet was bidden to undertake is clearly stated in 22:40-42, which were the first verses that gave Muslims the permission to take up arms against disbelievers and the idea has been further clarified in 2:191, 193 above. Among the numerous other verses which throw light on this subject the reader is referred to 2:195, 218, 257; 3:135; 4:91, 92; 5:3, 9, 33; 8:39, 62, 63; 9:6, 8, 10, 13; 22:39,41; 41:35;

42:49; 50:46; 60:9, 10.

The concluding clause i.e. *but if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors*, further confirms the interpretation of the verse as given above. If the Quran enjoined the waging of war till Islam obtained universal acceptance, then there would be no sense whatever in the injunction that if disbelievers desisted from fighting and no longer remained aggressors, Muslims should also stop hostilities; for, as the verse puts it, fighting is not permissible "except against the aggressors".

### 201. Important Words:

الشهر الحرام (Sacred Month). From the earliest pre-Islamic times, four out of the twelve lunar months have been regarded as sacred (9:36) in which fighting, etc., was held to be unlawful and people travelled in perfect peace and security. They were (1) *Dhul-Qa'dah*, (2) *Dhul-Hijjah*, (3) *Al-Muharram*, and (4) *Rajab*, the first named three months occurring

196. And <sup>a</sup>spend for the cause of Allah, and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands, and do good; surely, Allah loves those who do good.<sup>202</sup>

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:255; 14:32; 47:39; 57:11; 63:11.

consecutively and the last separately. As حج (Pilgrimage) was performed in *Dhul-Hijjah*, the three consecutive months served as a safe period for travelling for the purposes of Pilgrimage, both for the inward and the outward journey. The month of *Rajab* was generally meant for *عمرة* (the Lesser Pilgrimage). The system was pre-Islamic not in the sense that it had its origin in pagan Arabia but in the sense that it came in vogue along with the institution of Pilgrimage established by Abraham under the commandment of God (22:27, 28). As Islam retained the institution of حج it naturally upheld the sanctity of the Sacred Months as well. Even warring tribes desisted from fighting at the approach of a Sacred Month when all bloodshed vanished from the land (Bukhārī, Qaṣṭalānī, Zurqānī & Tāj).

The words فاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ (punish him for his transgression) literally mean, "transgress against him", but as one who retaliates against the transgression of a party does not really transgress but simply punishes the transgression of the aggressor, the words have been rightly translated as *punish him for his transgression*. This is quite in accordance with the Arabic idiom; for, as shown under 2:16, the Arabs generally repeat the very word used for expressing the wrongdoing

of a party to signify the punishment thereof.

### Commentary:

The verse embodies an important principle. If, in fighting, the sanctity of a Sacred Month is violated by some tribe hostile to Islam, Muslims are not to sit hand-bound and allow the aggressors to victimize them. They should retaliate; for in such retaliation lies the very safeguarding of the sanctity of a sacred thing; otherwise, the enemy would be unduly encouraged and would be all the more emboldened to commit such sacrileges.

But as fighting in a Sacred Month is a dangerous thing (2:218) and as the punishment of an act of transgression is also likely to exceed proper limits and a slight error of judgement on the part of Muslims might make them sinful in the sight of God, the latter part of the verse suitably warns them to fear God and always remain within proper bounds; for, *Allah is with those who fear Him*.

### 202. Commentary:

As the successful prosecution of war required money, the Faithful are here exhorted to spend in the cause of Allah so that the war which they have been bidden to wage in the defence of

197. And complete the Hajj and the 'Umrah for the sake of Allah: but <sup>a</sup>if you are kept back, then *make* whatever offering is easily available; and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its destination. And whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head, should make an expiation either by fasting or almsgiving or a sacrifice. But when you are safe, then he, who would avail himself of the 'Umrah together with the Hajj, should make whatever offering is easily

وَاتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ۖ فَإِنْ  
أَحْصَرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ  
وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ  
الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا  
أَوْ بِإِذَىٰ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ  
أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسْكَ ۚ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ <sup>وقفه</sup>  
فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا  
اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ  
فَصِيَامٌ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا

<sup>a</sup>48:26.

their faith may be conducted with efficiency.

The clause, and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands, does not mean, as supposed by some ignorant people, that Muslims should spare themselves and do nothing that may endanger their lives. On the contrary, it means that if Muslims will not spend money freely to carry on the war properly, they will be casting themselves into ruins with their own hands; for in that case the enemy will continue to persecute them and will one day wipe them out of existence. This interpretation is borne out by the sayings of some of the Companions themselves (Dāwūd, Tirmidhī & Jarīr).

The clause, *and do good, surely Allah loves those who do good*, may

have four meanings: (1) Either it means, do not spend money yourselves only but give it to your proper brethren also so that they too may be able to take part in the war. (2) Or it means, do not be unjust or cruel to your enemies in your eagerness to bring the war to a speedy end, for Allah loves those who are good to others. Elsewhere the Quran says: Let not the enmity of a people incite you to be unjust. Be just (to all) for that is nearer righteousness, (3) Or it means, think well of your Lord, i.e. do not think that if you spend your money under God's commandment, He will suffer you to come to ruin thereby. Or (4) it means, perform your duties well and fulfill your obligations faithfully and efficiently. The latter two meanings are

obtainable. But such of you as cannot find an offering should fast three days during the Pilgrimage, and seven when you return home; these are ten complete. This is for him whose family does not reside near the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in punishing.<sup>203</sup>

رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ذَٰلِكَ  
لِمَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ  
الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٩٧﴾

ع  
٨

supported by the saying of the Companions of the Holy Prophet also (Jarīr).

### 203. Commentary:

From this verse begin commandments relating to حج or the Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage is performed in the following manner: The would-be pilgrim enters into a state of احرام (*Ihrām*) on reaching the ميقات i.e. certain prescribed places slightly varying in distance in different directions, but in all cases outside حرم (the Sacred Territory). In the state of احرام the pilgrim is forbidden sexual intercourse, the use of scent or perfumed oil, the wearing of sewn garments, hunting and the like. The male pilgrim discards ordinary clothes, putting on white unsewn sheets and keeping the head uncovered. The female pilgrim may put on ordinary but simple clothes and should ordinarily keep her face uncovered. The pilgrim (male or female) is required to repeat the following words as often as possible: *Labbaik, Allāhumma labbaik, Labbaik. Lā sharīka laka labbaik. Innal-ḥamda wanni'mata laka wal*

*mulka lā sharīka laka...* i.e. "My Lord! I am at Thy service. There is no equal or partner with Thee. So I am at Thy service alone. All praise belongs to Thee and all blessings are from Thee and all authority rests in Thee. I say again, there is no equal or partner with Thee. So I am at Thy service alone."

At Mecca the first thing the pilgrim does, preferably after having a bath, is to perform seven circuits round the Ka'bah then he briskly walks or runs between the Ṣafā and the Marwah (see 2:159) seven times. On the eighth day of *Dhul-Hijjah* (the month of Pilgrimage) he goes in the morning from Mecca to *Minā*, which is about three miles from Mecca, where he halts to perform, at their appointed time, the five daily Prayers, beginning from the midday Prayer. Next morning (i.e. the 9th) he starts from *Minā* and passing through, or by, *Mash'arul-Harām*, which is about six miles from Mecca, he goes on to the great plain at '*Arafāt*, three miles further ahead, where, before he actually enters '*Arafāt*, he says the midday and the afternoon Prayers



together; and when all the pilgrims have entered 'Arafāt, the Imām delivers a sermon, while the pilgrims do nothing but silently pray and stand still. Thereafter the pilgrim returns after sunset to Muzdalifah or Mash'ar where he says the evening and the night Prayers together and spends most of his time in prayer and meditation. Next day (i.e. the 10th) after offering his morning Prayer at Mash'arul-Ḥarām he starts back early for Minā, where he casts pebbles (seven in number) at the three appointed pillars beginning with the Jamratul-'Aqabah, repeating this each day that he stays at Minā. The same day, i.e. the 10th, the pilgrim offers his sacrifice (goat, sheep, ram, cow, camel, etc.), gets his head shaved, takes a bath and puts on his ordinary clothes. Thereafter he proceeds to Mecca and again performs the circuit of the Ka'bah seven times and then returns to Minā if he should so desire. The stay at Minā may last from part of a day to three or four days known as أيام معدودات (i.e. the numbered days) with which the Ḥajj is completed. All this time the pilgrim should repeat, as many times as possible, the above mentioned prayer.

عمرة or the Lesser Pilgrimage consists in entering into a state of احرام (Ihrām) in the way described above, circuiting the Ka'bah seven times, running between the Ṣafā and the Marwah and offering a sacrifice which, however, is not obligatory. 'Umrah may be performed at any time of the year, whereas the Ḥajj or the Greater Pilgrimage is performed

only during the month of Dhul-Hijjah. For the literal meanings of the words Ḥajj and 'Umrah see note on 2:159.

The words, *If you are kept back*, refer to a state of affairs when a would-be pilgrim is prevented by disease, or a state of war, or some other cause, from visiting the Ka'bah to perform the Ḥajj or the 'Umrah. In this case the pilgrim may refrain from proceeding further and should sacrifice *whatever offering is easily available*, i.e. a goat, a sheep, a cow, or a camel, etc. But he should not shave his head *until the offering reaches its destination*, the idea being to remain in the state of Ihrām until the offering reaches Minā which is the place meant for it. If, however, the offering cannot be sent to Mecca, it may be sacrificed by the pilgrim at the place where he is detained and the meat either consumed by the pilgrim himself or distributed among friends, relatives, neighbours, etc. It will be noted that the offering of a sacrifice is obligatory only when a would-be pilgrim is prevented from completing his Ḥajj or 'Umrah. In ordinary circumstances when a person performs a Ḥajj or an 'Umrah separately, it is only supererogatory, becoming obligatory only when the Ḥajj and the 'Umrah are combined.

The clause, *should make an expiation either by fasting or almsgiving or a sacrifice*, relates to such people as cannot shave their heads owing to some ailment. The alternatives mentioned are meant to suit different grades of people. Fasting is meant for the poor; feeding the needy for the pilgrims of the

middle class; and the offering of a sacrifice for the rich. The Quran does not fix the number of days for which one is to fast, or the number of the poor whom one is to feed or the kind of animal which one is to sacrifice. The Holy Prophet is reported to have once prescribed fasting for three days (i.e. three one-day fasts), and the feeding of six poor men and the offering of a goat as a sacrifice (Bukhārī).

The words, *when you are safe*, mean, when the war is over, or when other obstacles are removed. In such case it is open to a person to proceed to Mecca with the intention of performing 'Umrah and then stay on to perform Hajj in the ensuing month of Dhul-Hijjah. This is what is referred to in the words: *who would avail himself of 'Umrah together with the Hajj*.

'Umrah and Hajj may be combined in two ways: One way is for the would-be pilgrim to make up his mind to perform the 'Umrah only and enter into the state of *Ihrām* with that intention, and then perform its rites and finish it. After that on the eighth day of Dhul-Hijjah one should again enter into the state of *Ihrām* and then perform the prescribed rites of Hajj. This form of combining the 'Umrah and the Hajj is technically called *Tamattu'* which literally means, "availing oneself of a thing".

The second way is that a man should make up his mind to perform the 'Umrah and Hajj simultaneously. He should, in this case, enter into the state of *Ihrām* with that intention and should remain in that state till the end of the Pilgrimage. This combination

of Hajj and 'Umrah is called *Qirān* (Qirān) which literally means, "the putting together of two things". In both *Tamattu'* and *Qirān* it is obligatory to offer the sacrifice, while in the case of Hajj alone or in the case of 'Umrah alone, the offering of the sacrifice is not obligatory. In the verse under comment the word *تمتع* is not used in the technical sense and covers *قران* also.

The fasting mentioned in the clause, *should fast three days during the Pilgrimage*, is distinct and separate from the fasting mentioned above. The first-mentioned fasting was meant for those who cannot shave their heads, while this fasting is meant for those who are unable to offer a sacrifice in case of *Tamattu'*. The three days spoken of are preferably the 11th, 12th and 13th of Dhul-Hijjah. The remaining seven fasts may be observed after one has returned home.

The clause, *this is for him whose family does not reside near the Sacred Mosque*, means that the permission to combine Hajj with 'Umrah is meant not for the residents of Mecca but for those who come from outside. By some, however, the words "the Sacred Mosque" have been extended to include the whole of *حرم* i.e. the Sacred Territory in and around Mecca.

The final clause, *fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in punishing*, has a twofold meaning: (1) That Muslims should not think that these are mere minor details of certain outward rites and may therefore not be strictly observed; for all these things which the All-

**R. 25.**

198. <sup>a</sup>The months of the Hajj are well known; so <sup>b</sup>whoever determines to perform the Pilgrimage in these months, *should remember that* there is to be no foul talk, nor any transgression, nor any quarrelling during the Pilgrimage. And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And furnish yourselves with *necessary* provisions, and surely, the best provision is righteousness. And fear Me *alone*, O men of understanding.<sup>204</sup>

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ ۖ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ  
فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا  
جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ۗ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ  
يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ  
التَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:190; 9:36. <sup>b</sup>3:98; 22:28.

Knowing God has prescribed for the Faithful are necessary in His sight and are meant for their own good. So, whoever neglects these details not only incurs the displeasure of God, but also hinders his own spiritual progress. (2) That the performance of *Hajj* should not fill the heart with pride (which unfortunately is very often the case nowadays), for this would defeat the very object of Pilgrimage which is the attainment of *تقوى* or fear of God. In such case, the so-called pilgrim will not find himself nearer God but rather would see His punishment descending on him.

In connection with this verse, it should also be noted that besides giving a general meaning as stated above, it also refers to a specific incident in Islamic history, i.e. the Truce of Hudaibiyyah. The verse was

revealed before that truce and hinted that a time was coming when Muslims would start towards Mecca with the intention of performing Pilgrimage, but they would be "kept back" from doing so by disbelievers. Later, however, God would grant them victory over the disbelievers and they would be "safe" to perform the Pilgrimage in peace. What a true picture of the apparent set-back at Hudaibiyyah and the subsequent Fall of Mecca at the hands of the Holy Prophet!

**204. Important Words:**

رفث (foul talk) means, foul, immodest or lewd talk or speech in relation to women. It also signifies acts leading to and including coition (Mufradāt & Lane). See also 2:188.

فسوق (transgression) is the same as

فسق for which see note on 2:27.

جدال (quarrelling) is derived from جدل. They say جدل الحبل i.e. he twisted the rope. جدل الرجل means, his dispute or quarrel became intensified. جادله means, he disputed or quarrelled with him. Thus جدال means, dispute or quarrel, or the use of strong and hot words (Aqrab).

الزاد (furnish yourselves) and تزودوا (provision) are both derived from زاد with واو as the central root letter. They say زاد الرجل i.e. the man prepared a provision for himself for a journey, etc. تزود means, he took for himself a provision. تزود من الأمير كتاباً إلى عامله means, he took from the caliph a letter of introduction to his governor so that the latter might afford him his assistance as and when required. الزاد means, any provision, etc. taken when proceeding on a journey (Aqrab). The word is used of extra store meant for future use (Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

The clause *the months of the Hajj are well known* is intended to hint that, in the matter of the time of Pilgrimage, the Quran gives no new commandment. The established custom is the right one, being rightly retained by the Arabs from the days of Abraham and Ishmael. The three lunar months during which one may formally undertake the Pilgrimage and enter into the state of *Ihrām* are *Shawwāl*, *Dhul-Qa'dah* and the first ten days of *Dhul-Hijjah* (Bukhārī).

The clause, *there is to be no foul talk, nor any transgression nor any quarrelling during the Pilgrimage*, does not mean that such acts are permissible at other times but that

these are necessary conditions for the completion of Pilgrimage, which would be like a soulless body if one indulged in such things while undertaking it. Another purpose underlying these injunctions is that a person should abstain from them particularly during the period of Pilgrimage so that it might become easy for him to shun these things at other times as well. The three vices selected are typical of what should be scrupulously avoided in a religious gathering like that at the Pilgrimage. رفث (*rafath*) stands for all foul, immodest and lewd talk as well as acts relating to sex. فسوق (*fusūq*) stands for transgression against the laws of God and disobedience of lawful authority, whether spiritual or temporal. And جدال (*jidāl*) stands for disputes and quarrels with co-travellers, companions and neighbours.

The clause, *And furnish yourselves with necessary provisions*, does not only refer to the preparation which one makes for an ordinary journey which is necessary in its own way, but also to the preparation which one has to make for a spiritual journey. In this sense the clause would signify "provide yourselves with piety and righteousness;" and in order to emphasize the latter kind of provision, the Quran fittingly adds, *and surely the best provision is righteousness*. But ordinary provision is also necessary; for, if a man does not take necessary provisions with him, he will be certainly put to great inconvenience and hardship on the way and will have to beg of others for help and both these things are

199. It is no sin for you that<sup>a</sup> you seek the bounty of your Lord. But when you pour forth from ‘Arafāt, remember Allah at Mash‘arul-Ḥarām; and<sup>b</sup> remember Him as He has guided you, although, before this, you were of those gone astray.<sup>205</sup>

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ وَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا هَدَيْكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الصَّالِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>62:11. <sup>b</sup>2:153, 204; 8:46; 62:11.

detrimental to the noble object underlying Pilgrimage.

## 205. Important Words:

فضل (bounty). See 2:65.

افضتم (you pour forth) is derived from افاض which is again derived from فاض. They say فاض السيل i.e. the flood-water was great in quantity and overflowed the banks. فاضت عينه means, his eye was full of tears, which began to flow down fast. افاض is both transitive and intransitive. They say افاض الماء i.e. he poured out water. افاض القوم means, the people, who were great in number, poured forth from the house and dispersed. ففاض is one whose charity flows like water (Aqrab).

عرافات (‘Arafāt) is the name given to a plain or valley near Mecca where pilgrims halt in the latter portion of the ninth day of *Dhul-Hijjah*. It is about a mile and a half in circuit with sloping sides rising nearly two hundred feet above the level of the adjacent plain. It is nine miles from Mecca, and the halt technically known as وقوف at this place forms the principal factor of *Hajj* or Pilgrimage. The word is derived from عرفت

meaning, he knew or recognized.

مشعر الحرام (Mash‘arul-Ḥarām) is the name given to a small hillock in *Muzdalifah*, which lies between Mecca and ‘Arafāt. Here the Holy Prophet said the evening and the night Prayers and offered special prayers to God before the rising of the sun. It is thus a place specially meant for meditation and prayer in Pilgrimage. It is about six miles from Mecca. The name is a compound of مشعر (from شعر) meaning, the place or means of perception or knowledge, and الحرام (from حرم) meaning, sacred.

## Commentary:

As the object of Pilgrimage is that the greatest possible number of Muslims should take part in it, therefore, the Quran permits pilgrims to engage in commerce and trade. Those who cannot take hard cash with them may carry merchandise, and thereby earn money to meet the expenses of the journey. This is what is hinted in the clause, *it is no sin for you that you seek the bounty of your Lord*. Similar permission is granted to those who gather for the Friday Prayers (62:11).

200. Then pour forth from where the people pour forth, and seek forgiveness from Allah; surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>206</sup>

ثُمَّ أَفِضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ  
وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

But trade should not interfere with the acts of worship and devotion prescribed in Pilgrimage. Says God, *but when you pour forth from 'Arafāt, remember Him as He has guided you.* The Holy Prophet used to pass his time in prayer and meditation at *Mash'arul-Harām* and the Faithful are warned that trade or any other worldly occupation should not make them forget the real object of Pilgrimage. The word افضتم (pour forth, lit. overflow) also has a metaphorical meaning, i.e. when you return from 'Arafāt, you should not return empty-handed but should return like a vessel full to overflowing with spiritual knowledge and blessings.

The reader will note that عرفات ('Arafāt) and مشعرالحرام (Mash'arul-Harām) are both attributive names which have now come to be used as proper ones. They are used to draw the attention of the pilgrim to the fact that Hajj should be a source of knowledge and spiritual realization to him and not a mere outward rite, a mere shell, with no inner soul. The word 'Arafāt also hints that it should be a means of mutual introduction and recognition for Muslims coming from different parts of the world.

## 206. Important Words:

استغفروا (ask forgiveness) is derived from غفر for which see 2:59. استغفر

would thus mean, he asked God for مغفرة in all its senses, i.e. covering up of sins, forgiveness, protection against stumbling, protection against punishment of sins, etc. استغفار is not confined to verbal asking for forgiveness only, but extends to, and includes, practical change for the better on the part of him who asks for forgiveness. He should ask for pardon both by word and deed (Mufradāt).

## Commentary:

The word ثم (then) in the clause, *then pour forth from where the people pour forth*, has given rise to a divergence of opinion among commentators. If it means "then", it must needs be taken to indicate sequence or order and the clause would thus signify: "after you have returned to مشعرالحرام from عرفات (as mentioned in the preceding verse), you should return (from مشعرالحرام to منى) from where the people return". But this is obviously superfluous, as nobody has ever differed about proceeding to and returning from مشعرالحرام with the people. A difference existed only with regard to proceeding to and returning from عرفات; for, whereas the Quraish and the Kinānah, known as Hums, stopped short at *Mash'arul-Harām*, a place within حرم (the Sacred Territory) and did not go up to 'Arafāt which is

outside حرم, other pilgrims went right up to 'Arafāt. Consequently if the commandment with regard to "pouring forth with the people" was at all needed, it was needed with regard to 'Arafāt and not with regard to *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* but in the verse under comment the Quran appears to mention it in connection with the latter. This difficulty has led some to interpret the word ثم not as "then" but simply as "and" which the idiom of the Arabic language justifies (Lane). These commentators have translated the words ثم افوضوا not as "then pour forth" but simply as "and pour forth". In this case the "pouring forth" spoken of may relate to 'Arafāt and not to *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* as the clause under comment appears to indicate. This is certainly not an incorrect interpretation so far as the rules of the Arabic language go; but another interpretation is also possible in which the primary meaning of ثم (then) is retained. This may be explained as follows. The preceding verse speaks of "pouring forth" or returning from 'Arafāt, thereby making it plain that going up to 'Arafāt is necessary. This completes the commandment with regard to the stay at and return from 'Arafāt. The verse under comment takes us further, speaking of the return from *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* and not from 'Arafāt, and thus the primary significance of ثم i.e. "then" is retained, for the obvious reason that the return from *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* comes after the return from 'Arafāt. As to the words, *pour forth from where the people pour forth*, it may

be noted that in this case they would be taken to have been used merely to indicate that whereas the return from 'Arafāt is confined to those who adhere to the right custom and go right up to 'Arafāt, the return from *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* is general, including also the proud Ḥums who stopped short at *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* and did not go further. This is further corroborated by the fact that whereas the Quran uses the word افضتم (you pour forth) with regard to the return from 'Arafāt, it uses the words افوضوا من الناس i.e. "pour forth from where the people (i.e. all people) pour forth" with regard to the return from *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* which was at that time more general and extended to all. Thus the meaning of the word الناس would also change with the change in the meaning of the word ثم. If ثم is taken to mean "and", and "the return" spoken of in this verse is taken to refer to the return from 'Arafāt, then الناس would mean "other people"; but if ثم is taken to mean "then" and "the return" spoken of here is taken to refer to the return from *Mash'arul-Ḥarām*, then الناس would signify "all people" and both these meanings are justified by the rules of the Arabic language.

In short, before the advent of Islam the Quraish and the Banū Kinānah known as Ḥums did not accompany other pilgrims to 'Arafāt, but stopped short at *Mash'arul-Ḥarām*, waiting to join other people returning from 'Arafāt. In this and the preceding verse, they are bidden not to stop short at *Mash'arul-Ḥarām* but to go up to 'Arafāt and do as other people

201. And when you have performed <sup>a</sup>the acts of worship prescribed for you, <sup>b</sup>celebrate the praises of Allah as you celebrated the praises of your fathers, or even more than that. And <sup>c</sup>of men there are some who say, 'Our Lord, grant us *good things* in this world;' and such a one shall have no share in the Hereafter.<sup>207</sup>

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتْ مَنَاسِكُكُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ  
كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ۚ فَمِنَ  
النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا  
لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ﴿٢٠١﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:129. <sup>b</sup>See 2:153. <sup>c</sup>4:135; 42:21.

do. After returning from 'Arafāt to Mash'arul-Harām, pilgrims should proceed to Minā where sacrifices are offered and the state of Ihṛām comes to an end. The clause, *and seek forgiveness from Allah*, hints that as Ḥajj consists of certain rites, there is the possibility of some persons not understanding the meaning and spirit of these rites. Moreover, where a number of religious acts are crowded into a short space of time, there is always the possibility of some persons missing and omitting certain things or of forgetting the prescribed order thereof. The pilgrims are, therefore, exhorted to have recourse to *Istighfār*, i.e. seeking God's forgiveness as well as His protection against error and its consequences.

The word استغفار literally means "to pray for the covering up of sins and protection," which signifies forgiveness for past sins and protection against future ones. Thus, when a pilgrim offers *Istighfār*, he seeks not only forgiveness for what is

past or protection against stumbling with regard to the observance of the rites of Pilgrimage but also protection against future stumblings.

It should also be remembered that *Istighfār* is not needed by ordinary people only, but holy servants of God also resort to it. The former offer *Istighfār* to seek protection against future sins as well as from the consequences of past errors; while the latter seek protection against human shortcomings and limitations that may hinder their progress and work. Holy men too, are human, and though they may be free from sins, they are always eager to seek divine help and assistance against human weaknesses and frailties. Nay, as they have to set an example to others and their responsibilities are also far heavier than those of other people, they resort to *Istighfār* more often than ordinary men.

## 207. Important Words:

فادكروا (celebrate praises of) is derived from ذكر which means, (1) he



talked of him by way of praising him; (2) he remembered him in his heart (Aqrab & Mufradāt). See also 2:41, 153.

أو (or) is a preposition, used to convey a number of meanings, the more important being: (1) or; (2) and; (3) nay; (4) unless; (5) until (Aqrab & Lane).

حلاق (share) means, an abundant share in what is good (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The clause, *celebrate the praises of Allah as you celebrated the praises of your fathers*, points to a practice of pagan Arabs who used to gather together at a certain place in *Minā* after the performance of the rites of Pilgrimage and glorify their forefathers by reciting poems in their praise. Muslims are here bidden to glorify God instead, and praise Him as they used to praise their forefathers, and, the words "even more than that" have been added to emphasize that God's praises should transcend all, for the word أو (or) also means, "nay". It is also possible that the word ك (as) in the expression كذا كرم (as you celebrated praises) has been used only to denote general similarity without reference to degree, and the word أو (or) has been used in the sense of "and". In this case the verse would mean that though in the general manner of praise your celebration of God's praises may resemble the praises with which you glorified your fathers, in degree it should excel it, being اشد (stronger, loftier and firmer).

Here is a good example of how the Quran, while retaining some old

customs, improved upon and, spiritualised them to serve the ends of Islam.

The clause, when you have performed the acts of worship prescribed for you, celebrate the praises of Allah as you celebrated the praises of your fathers or even more than that, has yet another meaning. As the word ذكر also means 'remembering' and the word أب (father) includes mother as well (12:101), the clause may also signify that the rites of Pilgrimage, if performed in the right spirit, should fill the heart of man with such love for God as to make him always remember Him just as a child remembers his parents. This is why the Quran begins the word اذكروا with the conjunction ف meaning "so" or "then", hinting that the result of the performance of the rites of Pilgrimage should be that a pilgrim should ever after remember his Creator with the fondness displayed by a child for his parents. But this is only the first stage. With holier men God's love should be even greater, as the verse hints in the words, or even more than that. Says the Holy Prophet, "The sign of true faith is that a believer's love for God and His Apostle should be greater than his love for any other being or thing" (Bukhārī).

The concluding clause, i.e. *of men there are some who say, 'Our Lord, grant us (good things) in this world, and such a one shall have no share in the Hereafter*, points to the fact that if the pilgrim confines himself to the

202. And "of them there are some who say: 'Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire.'<sup>208</sup>

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا  
حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا  
عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>42:21.

celebration of the praises of his fathers and forgets his Creator, he would be like a person who spends all his efforts in the pursuit of this world, even his prayers being confined to search after worldly things. Such a person shall evidently have no claim to the good things of the Hereafter. It is also significant that in this clause the Quran does not use the word حسنة (good things) with the words في الدنيا (in this world) thereby hinting that such men generally make no distinction between the good things of this world and the bad things thereof, their sole object being the things of this world, irrespective of whether they are good or bad.

As explained under Important Words, the word خلاق (share) occurring in the clause, *such a one shall have no share in the Hereafter*, really means, "an abundant share in what is good". So the verse would really mean not that such a person will get only a small share in the Hereafter but that, by remaining engrossed in the things of this world, he will deprive himself of a big share and will get no share at all. As the Quran has to condense vast subjects in a small space, it purposely uses words and constructions that take the smallest space but convey the vastest meaning.

### 208. Commentary:

In this verse God mentions that class of men whose efforts and wishes are not confined to this world only. They (1) seek the good things of this world and (2) seek the good things of the next world, and (3) try to be saved from the Fire which not only signifies the fire of Hell but also everything that is painful and is a source of heart-burning. It may be noted that here, unlike the preceding verse, God uses the word حسنة (good) with the words في الدنيا (in this world), meaning that even virtuous men may seek the things of this world but they should always be good and not bad.

The prayer mentioned in this verse is indeed very comprehensive and may be used by men of all grades in all their spiritual and temporal requirements, and the Holy Prophet is reported to have used this prayer very often (Muslim, ch. on *Dhikr*) with a view to teaching his Companions that if and when they choose to seek both the good things of this world and of the next, they should pray like this.

The prayer has another significance also. The good things of this world and the good things of the Hereafter spoken of in this verse may both stand for spiritual blessings, the good

203. For these there shall be a *goodly* share because of what they have earned. And Allah is swift at reckoning.<sup>209</sup>

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۖ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠٣﴾

204. And <sup>a</sup>remember Allah during the appointed number of days; but whoso hastens to leave in two days, it shall be no sin for him; and whoso stays

وَإِذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا

<sup>a</sup>See 2:153.

things of this world standing for such spiritual blessings as a righteous man gets in this world and the good things of the next world standing for those which he will get in the Hereafter. In fact, the very words used in the verse point to that signification, for the Quranic words في الدنيا حسنة do not mean "good things of this world" but simply "good in this world". In this case النار or "the Fire" would stand not for Hell, protection against which is, in fact, included in the good things of the next world, but for such trials and hardships as one may come across in this world in the struggle for spiritual advancement or in the effort to benefit others. It was in this sense that the Holy Prophet used this prayer with regard to himself; for personally he never sought even the good things of this world, though he always sought "good in this world".

## 209. Important Words:

نصيب (share) is derived from نصب. They say نصبه i.e. he set it up. Therefore نصيب means, a set share or portion (Lane).

## Commentary:

Such men as seek the good things of this world as well as the good things of the Hereafter (2:202) will have their reward from God according to their deserts. The clause, *Allah is swift at reckoning*, however, contains a warning to such men, hinting that as some of their efforts are being spent in pursuit of the things of this world, they should be careful lest any stumbling or weakness on their part should bring on them God's displeasure. The clause also points to the important fact that God has so ordained that in nature every action is immediately followed by its consequences, inasmuch as it leaves an impression on man, and thus all actions are preserved. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that when a man commits an evil deed, a black spot is formed in his heart and if he repeats the sin, the spot grows bigger and so on (Musnad). This, indeed, is the result which quickly follows the actions of man. In fact it is a reckoning which accompanies all actions of man.

behind, it shall be no sin for him. *This is* for him who fears God. And fear Allah and know that you shall *all* be brought together before Him.<sup>210</sup>

اللَّهُوَاعَلِّمُواالَّذِينَتُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢١٠﴾

### 210. Commentary:

The glorification of God, or the celebration of His praises enjoined in the preceding verses is to be particularly observed in the appointed number of days to be spent in *Minā* after the *Hajj* is over. These are the 11th, the 12th and the 13th day of *Dhul-Hijjah* during which the pilgrims are required, so far as possible, to stay at *Minā* and pass their time in God's glorification. In these days they are also required, as a symbol of the driving out of Satan, to cast pebbles daily at the three pillars so long as they stay there. These are called أيام التشريق i.e. the days of beauty and brightness.

The clause, *whoso hastens to leave in two days*, refers to the stay in *Minā*. If a pilgrim leaves *Minā* two days earlier or stays behind for two days more, no sin shall attach to him, provided everything he does is done with good intention, acting righteously and God-fearingly.

The verse ends with the clause, *and fear Allah and know that you shall be brought together before Him*, to bring home to the reader or the pilgrim that the underlying object of the Pilgrimage is تقوى, the very word with which the Quran began its commandments about *Hajj* in 2:197,

thus emphasizing that mere outward observance of certain rites is nothing unless they are accompanied by تقوى or the spirit of righteousness which must underlie all actions of man.

The clause, واعلموا انكم اليه تحشرون translated above as, *know that you shall all be brought together before Him*, is also intended to hint that the gathering in *Hajj* is not meant for the performance of certain rites and ceremonies but, as it were, for meeting God. In this case, the clause would be rendered as, "know that (in *Hajj*) you are brought together (i.e. the purpose of your gathering is) to meet God" and you must, therefore, behave accordingly. The gathering in *Hajj* is truly like the حشر (gathering) on the great Day of Judgement.

Now that the description of *Hajj* as given in these verses has come to an end, it would be appropriate to give here a brief but collective note on the wisdom and the significance of this act of worship and devotion. The Pilgrimage is indeed a great spiritual ordinance. According to the Quran, the Ka'bah is the first house of worship that was built for mankind (3:97). It dates not from Abraham, who simply rebuilt it, but from Adam. The Quran speaks of it as "the Ancient House" (22:30, 34). A Jewish tradition also says that Abraham built

"the altar which Adam had built, which had been destroyed by the waters of the Deluge, which Noah had again builded, and which had, been destroyed in the age of divisions" (The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel translated by J. W. Ethebridge, London, 1862, p. 226). The Ka'bah is the only altar that answers this description; there is no other place so ancient. It was the purpose of God that men from all quarters should assemble at this central house and thus be reminded of their common humanity and common relation with the Lord of the worlds. Differences which divided one nation from another were to be forgotten and all drawn closer to one another in one common bond. The *Hajj* provides pilgrims of different lands and diverse nationalities with an excellent opportunity to cultivate acquaintance with one another and discuss matters of common interest. This purpose has been made all the more accessible by ordering pilgrims to pass the days of *Hajj*, and the days following, not within the four walls of Mecca but out in the open desert at *Minā*, *Muzdalifah* and '*Arafāt* and back again in *Minā*.

The different objects and places which play an important part in Pilgrimage are spoken of in the Quran as شعائر الله (2:159; 5:3; 22:33) or the Signs of God, which shows that they are meant by God to serve as symbols to impress upon the minds of pilgrims their inward significance.

The Ka'bah or the *Baitullāh* (the

House of God), the very first house of worship round which thousands of devout pilgrims perform the circuit and towards which they all turn while offering their Prayers wherever they be, recalls to their mind the Unity and Majesty of God upon Whom depends all creation. It also reminds one of the unity of mankind.

The act of running between the *Ṣafā* and the *Marwah* calls to the minds of pilgrims the pathetic story of Hagar and Ishmael, reminding them how God provides for his helpless servants even in the solitude of a great wilderness.

*Minā* is a name derived from the word '*umniyyah* which means "an object" or "a desire". This reminds the pilgrim of the fact that he goes there with the "object" or the "desire" of meeting God. From *Minā* the pilgrim proceeds to *Muzdalifah* which means "nearness" and reminds him that the object with which he had set out has drawn "near". The other name of *Muzdalifah* is *Mash'arul-Ḥarām*, meaning the sacred symbol. This also hints that the final stage is near. From *Muzdalifah*, the pilgrim proceeds to '*Arafāt*, the root-meaning of which is "to recognize". This reminds him that he has now reached the stage of "recognition" where he has "recognized" or known the One Lord and has met Him.

Again, the place chosen for this great concourse of the Faithful is a barren waste, devoid of all vegetation, as the Quran itself states (14:38). The only things that are met

with there are sand, pebbles, rocks and rugged hillocks. Such a place has been chosen to bring home to us the fact that it possesses absolutely no attraction for which one might visit it. If there is anything for which one should go there, it is God and God alone. This is why in the present verse the Quran says, "know that you are being gathered here (not for any worldly object but) to meet Him".

*Ihrām* reminds one of the Day of Resurrection. Like the shroud of a dead body, the pilgrim is covered only with two unsewn sheets, one for the upper part of the body and the other for the lower; and he also has to remain bareheaded. This condition is to remind him that he has here, as it were, risen from the dead. The pilgrims gathered together at 'Arafāt truly present the spectacle of the Day of Resurrection—men suddenly risen from the dead in their white shrouds and assembled in the presence of their Lord.

The casting of pebbles at the three pillars at *Minā*—known as *Dunyā*, *Wuṣṭā* and 'Aqabah, is also an interesting representation. It reminds the pilgrim of the three stages through which man has to pass and which have been referred to in the Quran as the three stages of human life, viz. (1) the present world, or *Dunyā* as it is called, which is symbolized by the first pillar, significantly called *Jamratud-Dunyā*, i.e. the pillar situated near; (2) the grave or the middle stage lying between this world and the next, the pillar corresponding to which is

called *Jamratul-Wuṣṭā*, i.e. the middle pillar; and (3) the next world (known also as عقی 'Uqbā) which is symbolized by the third pillar, which is accordingly called *Jamratul-'Aqabah*, i.e. the pillar of the distant hillock that comes after the others. The casting of pebbles at these pillars is also symbolic of Satan being pelted. Evil thoughts should be driven out of one's mind just as God has driven away Satan from His presence.

The animals sacrificed are reminders of the great sacrifice of his son Ishmael offered by Abraham, and teach, in symbolic language, that man should ever be willing not only to sacrifice himself but also his wealth and property and even children in the way of God out of love for Him.

Pilgrims perform seven circuits round the Ka'bah, run seven times between the Ṣafā and the Marwah and cast seven pebbles at the pillars at *Minā*. The number *seven* being regarded by the Arabs as a symbol of perfection (Aqrah), the pilgrim is thereby reminded that in Pilgrimage, as in all other things, he should not be satisfied with half measures. He should always aim at perfection and get it. It is significant that the stages of spiritual progress which lead man to perfection and which have been detailed in 23:2-12 are also seven.

In short, the various rites of the *Hajj* and the objects that play a part therein are all emblematic and are replete with great and momentous lessons, but only for those who care to meditate.

205. And <sup>a</sup>of men there is he whose talk on this life would please thee, and he would call Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart, and yet he is the most contentious of quarrellers.<sup>211</sup>

206. And when he is in authority, he runs about in the

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ  
الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ  
اللَّهُ الْخَصَامُ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ

<sup>a</sup>63:5.

### 211. Important Words:

يعجبك (would please thee) is derived from عجب meaning, he wondered; he became pleased. عجه means, it pleased him and caused him to wonder (Aqrab).

ال (most contentious) is derived from لد (ladda). They say له meaning, he contended or quarrelled with him vehemently. So ال, which is the noun of pre-eminence from it, means, one who is a great quarreller. The plural of ال is لـ—ludd (Aqrab).

الخصام (quarrellers) is the plural of خصم (quarreller). They say خصمه i.e. he quarrelled or disputed with him. خصم and خصيم and مخاصم all give the same meaning, i.e. quarreller. The word الخصام is also used, in the infinitive sense, meaning the act of quarrelling (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

Two kinds of men have already been mentioned: (1) those who seek only the things of this world (2:201); and (2) those who seek both the good things of this world and those of the next (2:202). The present verse and

those that follow mention two extreme types of these two classes. Of the former class, states the verse under comment, there are those who wax eloquent in their talk about this world, pleading for the necessity of improving the conditions of life for mankind and calling God to witness their sincerity. Their eloquence and apparent love for fellow beings would deceive the listener, but at heart they love only their own selfish interests and, would vehemently dispute with others for their smallest rights, supposed or real, displaying none of that spirit of sacrifice which is essential for real human progress. They would look to their own interests or the interests of their family or those of their community or their nation only and would not make any sacrifice for, or even do justice to, others.

The clause, *he would call Allah to witness*, shows that such people outwardly profess faith in God but at heart are lacking in the quality of universal brotherhood which must result from a true belief in a Universal God—"Lord of all the worlds", as the Quran puts it.

land to create disorder in it and destroy the crops and the progeny of man; and Allah loves not disorder.<sup>212</sup>

فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكُ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ط  
وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ ۝

### 212. Important Words:

تولى (he is in authority) is derived, from تولى. تولى means: (1) he turned his back, he went away from one's presence; (2) he held command, or he was in authority; he became a والى or ruler (Aqrab & Tāj).

سعى (runs about) means: (1) he walked briskly or he ran; (2) he made an effort; or he strove to obtain an object (Aqrab).

الحَرْث (the crops) is the noun-infinitive from حَرَثَ i.e. he ploughed or tilled the soil; he sowed seeds or planted plants in it; he acquired or earned or laboured for wealth or sustenance; he worked or laboured for the goods of the world. حَرْث means: (1) a tilth or a piece of land ploughed for sowing, or land actually sown with some crop; (2) land under crop; (3) crop or produce of land whether field crop or garden crop; (4) gain, acquisition or earning; (5) reward or recompense; (6) worldly goods; (7) wife or wives, because a wife is like a tilth in which seed is sown to bear crop in the form of children; (8) a much used road or a beaten track (Lane).

النَّسْل (progeny). نسل الولد means, he begot a child. نسل الرجل means, the man had many children; the progeny of the man increased. نسل means: (1) creatures; (2) children; (3) progeny, whether of man or beast (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

This verse further develops the idea contained in the preceding one. The type of man described in the previous verse (i.e. one whose talk about the affairs of this world is very pleasing but who is selfish at heart) becomes unmasked when he happens to be in authority, or when he goes away from the presence of the people and meets his associates in private. Thus both the meanings of the word تولى as mentioned under Important Words are appropriate here: (1) While he is in the presence of those who are sincere lovers of mankind, he says pleasing things; but when he goes away from them and meets his comrades in private, he strives to create disorder on the earth. (2) Similarly, when he happens to come to power, he becomes exposed and all his talk about improving the affairs of the world vanishes like smoke, and instead of acting like a reformer, he actually becomes a source of disorder.

The clause, *destroy the crops and the progeny*, means that all his efforts are directed towards harming people and their property. The words حَرَثَ and نَسْل have a number of meanings and all are applicable here. They refer to all kinds of damage relating to person and property.

The words, *Allah loves not*



207. And when it is said to him, 'Fear Allah,' pride incites him to *further* sin. So Hell shall be his sufficient reward; and surely, it is an evil place of rest.<sup>213</sup>

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ  
بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَيْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿٢٠٧﴾

*disorder*, come as a fitting reply to the clause in the preceding verse, i.e. *he calls Allah to witness as to that which is in his heart*. Allah's evidence goes against him, for the man is after disorder, and Allah loves not disorder.

### 213. Important Words:

أَخَذَتْهُ (incites him) is from أَخَذَ meaning, he took, or he took hold; or he seized; or he punished etc. (Aqrab). أَخَذْتَهُ بِكَذَا means, you incited him to do that and made him stick to it (Kashshāf). أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ may also mean, pride encompasses him with sin (Muḥīṭ); or pride seizes him owing to his sin (Fath).

العِزَّة (pride) is derived from عَزَّ which means, he became mighty and honoured and noble. عَزَّ الشَّيْءُ means, the thing became rare. الْعِزَّة means, (1) might and power; (2) high position; (3) honour; (4) self-exaltation (Lane); (5) consciousness of one's position and rank; (6) pride in bad sense; (7) vanity (Aqrab).

جَهَنَّم (Hell). Lexicographers differ as to the origin of the word جَهَنَّم but they generally agree that in Arabic it has no root except itself and is used as a proper name for the place of punishment reserved for the evildoers in the next world. It is, however, possible that the word has been derived from جَهِم meaning, he became frowning or contracted, or ugly in

face. جَهْمَة means, the middle or the darkest part of the night. جَهَام means, clouds that have no water (Lane). In this case the ن in جَهَنَّم would be something additional as in the word التَّدَد derived from الد meaning, a quarreller (Muḥīṭ). Thus جَهَنَّم would mean, a place of punishment which is dark and waterless and makes the faces of its inmates ugly and contracted.

### Commentary:

The description of the kind of man mentioned in 2:205 is continued in this verse also. When such a person comes to power and enters upon a career of disorder and destruction, he becomes deaf to advice and good counsel. Nay, if anyone makes bold to offer him a word of advice, he flares up and becomes all the more stiffened in his tendency towards mischief-making. A false sense of dignity and prestige is his chief stumbling block, his vanity inciting him to further acts of sin, till his pride virtually encompasses him on all sides. Such a one paves his own way to Hell, which is indeed a bad resting place.

The word حَسْبُ (sufficient) in the clause, *Hell shall be his sufficient reward*, points to the fact that as such a man is never contented in this life, and is always hungering for more wealth and more power and more

208. And of men there is he who would sell himself to seek the pleasure of Allah; and <sup>a</sup>Allah is Compassionate to His servants.<sup>214</sup>

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ  
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

209. O ye who believe! come into submission wholly and <sup>b</sup>follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy.<sup>215</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ  
كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ  
إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٠٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:31; 9:117; 57:10. <sup>b</sup>See 2:169.

dominion, so nothing in this world would suffice him. He will find satisfaction and sufficiency only in the fire of Hell. Similarly, the word *مهاد* (place of rest) points to the fact that the man who tramples on the rights of others in order to secure comfort for himself will find no rest in this life; his only rest will be in Hell.

#### 214. Important Words:

*رهووف* (Compassionate) is derived from *رأف*. They say *رأف به* meaning, he pitied him, he was compassionate to him. *رأفة* (compassion) is like *رحمة* (mercy) but signifies greater tenderness, though the latter is certainly more extensive in meaning. *رهووف* means, compassionate or pitiful, and is one of the attributes of God, though like *رحيم* it may also be applied to human beings as in 9:128 (Lane).

#### Commentary:

Having completed the description of an extreme type of man belonging to the first-mentioned class of people, i.e. those who seek only the things of this world, the Quran now describes a

type of man belonging to the second-mentioned class, i.e. those who seek the good things of this world as well as of the next. And of these, it singles out here the noblest type whose aim is to seek the pleasure of God alone. To such men the good things of this world mean only such spiritual blessings as are vouchsafed to righteous men in this very world or such things as lead to the attainment thereof (2:202). Their sole concern is to seek the pleasure of their Lord, as if they had given away their souls for that very purpose. They use the things of this world, not because these things please them, but because God's law has made them the support of a life which they find pleasure in devoting to the service of God. Thus they approach the things of this world not directly but through God. To such servants of His, God is indeed most Compassionate and His compassion for them has a good leaven of tenderness in it.

#### 215. Important Words:

*السلم* (submission) is derived from

210. But if you slip after the clear Signs that have come to

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ

سلم meaning, he was or became safe from danger or disease or defect, etc. سالمه means, he made peace with him.

اسلم means, he submitted; he embraced Islam. السلم therefore, means (1) submission; (2) peace; (3) the religion of Islam (Aqrah).

كافة (wholly) is derived from كف. They say كف الاناء meaning, he filled the vessel to the full. كف الشيء means, he collected the thing all in one place. كفه means, he turned him away from it and consequently he (the latter) kept back; he prevented or restrained him from the affair, so that, as a result thereof, he (the latter) desisted from it. Thus كف is both transitive and intransitive. كافة is the feminine from كات and means: (1) all together with none standing aside (Aqrah); (2) wholly or completely, not partially or half-heartedly (Lane); (3) preventing the enemy and turning him back; and (4) restraining oneself, or restraining the people from sin and digression (Mufradât).

### Commentary:

Having completed the description of the two classes of men along with their sub-divisions in the previous verses, the Quran now fittingly addresses believers generally and those weak in faith particularly, calling upon them to try to be reckoned among the best and noblest type of men. To attain this end they should do two things, one positive and the other negative: (1)

Individually they should come into submission or, in other words, they should enter Islam, wholly. Partial submission and half-hearted obedience will not do; and collectively they should try to offer submission all together, allowing no member to stand aside and remain outside the circle. (2) They should eschew the ways of Satan, who is an open enemy of Islam and is out to cut all holy ties asunder (2:169).

Besides the above two meanings, the clause ادخلوا في السلم كافة (come into submission wholly) is capable of yet another meaning. As كافة also means, restraining or turning one back, the clause may be translated as, "come into submission wholly, shutting all such doors through which sin may enter". This is indeed a most comprehensive advice and can save many a soul, if people only care to act up to it.

The word خطوات (footsteps) in the clause, *follow not the footsteps of Satan*, apparently seems to be superfluous, for, "following Satan" seems to give the same meaning as "following in his footsteps", but it is not so really. The word خطوات (footsteps) has been very wisely added to hint that those who follow Satan do so slavishly and blindly. Just as a blind man who cannot see his way, finds it convenient to place his hand on the shoulder of any passer-by and then blindly tread on in his footsteps, so do they.

you, then know that Allah is Mighty *and* Wise.<sup>216</sup>

211.<sup>a</sup> Are they waiting for anything but that Allah should come to them in the coverings of the clouds with angels, and the matter be decided? And to Allah do *all* things return.<sup>217</sup>

الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَاَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢١٠﴾  
هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٢١١﴾

<sup>a</sup>6:159; 16:34; 89:23.

### 216. Commentary:

The preceding verse called upon believers, particularly those weak in faith, to try to become perfect Muslims, and pointed out to them the means by which they could become so. The present verse makes it clear that if, even after this warning and after God's clear Signs had come to them, they should slip and digress from the true path, they would find God "Mighty and Wise", hinting that in that case they would rightly deserve punishment by the Wise God Who possesses the power to punish.

The word "Wise" also hints that erring ones should not despair; for, God being Wise, He has kept the way open for their return to the right faith. In fact, the liability of man to err is not without purpose. In His eternal wisdom, God has made man a free agent who is liable to err, so that his error might serve as an incentive for him to rise again and make a redoubled effort towards the ideal.

### 217. Important Words:

يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ (Allah should come to them) is a metaphorical expression, meaning, Allah should come to them

with His punishment, i.e. Allah should punish them. The metaphor *ايان الله* i.e. coming of God, is used by the Quran elsewhere also (16:27; 59:3). In contrast to this, the Quran uses the metaphor *توب الله* i.e. turning of God, to express His turning with mercy (2:38; 9:117.) Similarly, *ايان الملكة* i.e. the coming of the angels, indicates their coming with punishment.

ظلة (coverings) is the plural of ظلة (*zullah*) which is derived from ظل and اظل the latter word meaning, he or it afforded or cast a shadow. But whereas ظل (*zill*) the plural of which is ظلال or اظلال means, shadow, ظلة whose plural is ظلل, means, a covering or a shade, i.e. a thing that casts or gives a shade or a shadow (Aqrab). The word ظلة or ظلل is generally used in connection with punishment (Mufradât).

الغمام (clouds) for which see 2:58. The word has been used by the Quran both in connection with mercy (7:161) and punishment (25:26).

### Commentary:

The form of speech has been changed here from the second to the

**R. 26.**

212. Ask of the children of Israel "how many clear Signs We gave them. But whoso changes the gift of Allah after it has come to him, surely, then, Allah is severe in punishing."<sup>218</sup>

سَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَةٍ  
بَيِّنَةٍ ۖ وَ مَن يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنِّ بَعْدِ  
مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢١٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>17:102; 28:37.

third person. The verse has apparently been addressed to either disbelievers or to hypocrites and the weak in faith. If it be taken to refer to disbelievers, as the change of form in the address indicates, it would mean that by desisting from belief they are, as it were, waiting for the punishment of God, and the verse incidentally hints that appointed punishment would come to them through raining clouds. The reference is to the Battle of Badr, when God helped believers by sending down clouds and rain (Bukhārī), as was promised (25:26), and also sent down angels (8:10) who inspired the believers with courage and filled the hearts of the disbelievers with fear (8:13). Some of the disbelievers are reported to have actually seen the angels on that day (Zurqānī). The matter was then "decided"; for, on that memorable day, all the chief leaders of the Quraish were killed, the Muslims obtaining a decisive victory which broke the power of the enemy. The coming of clouds refers to the rainfall which on the battlefield of Badr proved a blessing for the Muslims. It made the sand firm for them, while the land on the side of the enemy,

being clayey, became slippery.

If, however, the verse be taken to refer to the hypocrites or the weak in faith, as the preceding two verses would suggest, then the clause, *that Allah should come to them in the coverings of the clouds*, would mean that if they did not mend their ways, God would have to chastise them even though they were apparently resting in the shade of faith, which is likened to a غمام or cloud. As shown under Important Words above, the word غمام (clouds) is sometimes used in connection with God's mercy (7:161).

**218. Commentary:**

The preceding verses referred to those weak in faith who had not yet "come into submission wholly" (2:209). The position of these people was that they had received a favour of God but practically they sought to "change" it. They wished to be known as Muslims and yet to be free to live as they liked. This was exactly what the Israelites had done before. So the Quran fittingly turns here to the story of the children of Israel who afforded an object-lesson for Muslims. The Holy Prophet and, for that matter,

every reader of the Quran is asked to enquire of the descendants of Israel how many and how varied were the Signs which God had bestowed upon them as a favour and how persistent and impudent was their rejection of His Messengers and their disregard of His teachings.

The expression, *whoso changes the gift of God*, appears to be rather peculiar; but really the word *يبدل* (changes) gives a very interesting meaning. For believers it means, accepting the teaching of a Prophet in theory but rejecting it in practice, as unfortunately is very often the case with the weak in faith. They receive a thing as a gift or blessing, but by abstaining from acting upon it, they incur the displeasure of God, thus practically "changing" a favour into a disfavour.

For disbelievers the expression means converting a *مبشر* Prophet into a *منذر* Prophet. The Quran speaks of the Prophets of God as a *نعمة* i.e. a favour or gift (5:21) and it further holds that the mission of every Prophet is twofold—he is a *مبشر* or bearer of glad tidings for those who accept him, and he is a *منذر* or warner of coming punishment for those who reject him (18:57). Now when God sends a Prophet, He wishes the people to accept him as a bearer of glad tidings only, and it is the people themselves who reverse the position by rejecting him. In this way the people, as it were, "change" the *مبشر* Prophet into the *منذر* Prophet.

Again, for Israelites or Jews the

expression, *whoso changes the gift of Allah*, may mean that though they knew that their Scriptures embodied the word of God which was a favour and a blessing, yet they had the audacity to interfere with it in order to meet their own ends (5:14), thus "changing" the very substance of God's favour.

The expression may have yet another meaning. The *شريعة* or Law being meant as a guidance, is a mercy or a blessing of God (5:4 & 6:155, 156). But Christians, who are an offshoot of the Jews have "changed" it into a curse (Gal. 3:13).

The expression "gift of God" may refer to the manifold and multifarious favours which God had bestowed upon the Israelites in the form of Prophets and their noble teachings. But they "changed" the gift of God by rejecting the Prophets and disobeying their teachings. The expression may also refer to the Holy Prophet and the religion brought by him; they are certainly the greatest gifts of God for mankind, and whoever rejects Islam either by disbelieving or disobeying its teachings, deserves God's severest punishment. In either case, the verse also warns hypocrites and those weak of faith among Muslims that if they accepted the Holy Prophet outwardly but rejected him in their heart or if they accepted his teachings as being from God but did not act upon them, they would be "changing" the gift of God and would make themselves liable to severe punishment.

213. <sup>a</sup>The life of this world is made to appear attractive to those who disbelieve; and they scoff at those who believe. But those who fear God shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and <sup>b</sup>Allah bestows His gifts on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning.<sup>219</sup>

رُزِيَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا  
وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ  
اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ  
مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ۝

<sup>a</sup>3:15; 18:47; 57:21. <sup>b</sup>3:38; 24:39; 35:4; 40:41.

### 219. Important Words:

زين (is made to appear attractive) is passive voice from زين which is derived from زان. They say زان الشيء or زين الشيء meaning, he decorated or embellished or beautified the thing so as to make it look attractive (Aqrab).

يسخرون (they scoff) is formed from سخر. They say سخر منه or سخر به i.e. (1) he mocked at or scoffed at or laughed at him; he derided or ridiculed him; (2) he cut a joke with him or made a jest of him; (3) he deemed him ignorant (Aqrab & Lane).

فوقهم (above them). The word فوق is the infinitive noun from فاق. They say فاقه i.e. he was above him or was superior to him (in any sense); he excelled him in rank, eminence, nobility, knowledge or any other good quality; he overcame him in argument (Aqrab & Lane).

يوم القيامة (the Day of Resurrection) is a compound expression being made up of يوم (day) and القيامة (resurrection). The word يوم (day) is also used to denote time generally as already explained in 1:4; and القيامة

(resurrection) is derived from قام meaning, (1) he stood up, or (2) he stood still. The expression قامت الساعة means, the appointed hour of resurrection came to pass. القيامة therefore, means the rising of the dead or the Resurrection (Aqrab). The word is also used for such occasions on which people leave their homes and gather in a place in response to a call, as in the Friday Prayers (Tāj). Thus figuratively the word القيامة (resurrection) may denote a state of unusual life and activity following a state of inertia and lifelessness. The word القيامة is really القيام (the act of standing) which is the noun-infinitive from قام, the final ة being added to denote the act of resurrection being sudden and all together (Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

As the preceding verse spoke of those who change the gift of God by rejecting it or refusing to act upon it, the present verse fittingly provides the underlying reason of such rejection or refusal. The attention of these people is devoted to the affairs

of this world, which appear so attractive to them as to leave no room in their hearts for God and His Messenger. The فاعل or author of the act denoted by the verb زين which is in the passive voice, has not been named here; but elsewhere the Quran clearly states that it is Satan who has taken upon himself to make the things of this world look beautiful and attractive in the eyes of unbelieving people (15:40), who thus become engrossed in the affairs of the world.

Intoxicated with their material gains and worldly possessions, disbelievers, and for that matter, hypocrites also, look down upon believers and scoff at them when they see their apparently low worldly position and hear promises of victory and future greatness being made to them. In view of the utter helplessness of the believers, they cannot possibly bring themselves to conceive that believers will ever become heirs to that eminence and glory which is promised to them by God and, therefore, they treat such promises with contempt. But truth has always triumphed over falsehood in the end. The history of all religions and particularly that of Islam bears undeniable testimony to this fact.

The clause, *but those who fear God shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection*, does not mean that the triumph of the Faithful over disbelievers will be confined to the next world only. The words "the Day of Resurrection" have been added to point out that whereas believers will also triumph in this world, as borne out by the facts of history, their triumph in the next world will be

complete and perpetual. These words may also refer, according to Arab usage, to the time of the downfall of disbelievers and the rise of the Faithful in this very world. In this sense the clause would signify, "wait a while, for the appointed time is not far distant when Muslims will triumph over their enemies and will be above them in all respects", i.e. in knowledge, wealth, power, etc.—a fact to which the early history of Islam in Medina, Damascus, Baghdad, Egypt, Spain, etc., bears ample testimony. To quote only one instance, i.e. that of the Arabs being in their time above the rest of the world in science, Robert Briffault says: "The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal to Arab culture; it owes its existence" (*The Making of Humanity*).

It will be noted that while making the promise of future greatness, the verse substitutes the expression "those who fear God" for the expression "those who believe". This change has been made to point to the fact that to obtain triumph mere ايمان (belief) is not enough; the Muslims should effect a real change in themselves, by attaining تقوى or fear of God. The phrase "without reckoning" may mean three things: (1) that the favours and gifts of God know no ending; for a thing that does not end cannot be reckoned; (2) that God bestows upon believers more favours and more gifts than they appear to deserve, the more so because believers spend in the cause of God to the utmost of their power without



214. Mankind were one community, *then they differed among themselves*, so "Allah raised Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and sent down with them the Book containing the truth that He might judge between the people wherein they differed. *But now they began to differ about the Book*, and none differed about it except those to whom it was given, after clear Signs had come to them, out of envy towards one another. Now has Allah, by His command,

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۖ فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ  
النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۖ وَأَنْزَلَ  
مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ  
فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۖ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا  
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ  
الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ  
آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ  
وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ  
مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:166; 6:49; 18:57.

keeping an account of what they spend, so God also showers His blessings upon them without reckoning; (3) that God treats the believers as friends; and as people do not keep an account of what they give to their friends, therefore God also keeps no account of what He gives to the Faithful.

As to the relevancy of this clause to the previous one, it may be noted that as God promised to grant special victory and unusual greatness to believers—so much so that they were to be "above" the disbelievers in all respects when the time of "resurrection" (i.e. the fall of the disbelievers and the rise of the believers) came—the question naturally arose, how out of all proportion to their efforts and

resources were the handful of believers going to attain this glorious triumph? In reply to this implied question, the Quran says that the people need not doubt this prophecy for the matter is not to be settled by ordinary rules of cause and effect but by the fact, so amply borne out by history, that "Allah bestows His favours on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning." In this connection we may well quote from Carlyle who, while speaking of the spectacular rise of Islam to power, says: "These Arabs, the man Mohammad, one spark on a world of what seemed black unnoticeable sand; but lo, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Granada!" (*On Heroes and Hero Worship*).

guided the believers to the truth in regard to which they (the unbelievers) differed; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the right path.<sup>220</sup>

### 220. Commentary:

In the preceding verses different classes of people—believers and disbelievers together with their subdivisions—have been mentioned. The verse under comment not only traces the genesis of these classes but also hints to Muslims that, just as the world began with all people as one community, God now wishes them again to become one community through the Holy Prophet who, unlike previous Prophets, came with a universal mission.

The clause, *Mankind were one community*, may mean: (1) mankind, i.e. all men were originally one people; (2) all disbelievers are one people. In the first-mentioned case, the verse would mean that, in the beginning of the world, all mankind were one people. They had no social rules, no polity, no civic laws. Then in the course of time, differences arose among them with regard to these things. So God sent to them Prophets to guide them how to live good and useful lives.

In the second case, the meaning of the clause would be that before the advent of a Prophet all men are like one people in the sense that they are all disbelievers, and disbelief and wrongdoing reign supreme in the world. But when a Prophet appears, all people, in spite of their mutual

differences, form one united front against him. This meaning is in harmony with the well-known saying of the Holy Prophet, الكفر ملة واحدة i.e. all disbelievers (to whatever creed or religion they may belong) are one people.

The clause, *and sent down with them the Book*, does not mean that God revealed a separate Book to every Prophet. In that case, "Books", instead of "the Book", would have been the appropriate word. In fact, the "sending down of a Book" to a Prophet does not always mean the actual revelation of it to him in person. The Quran uses similar words with regard to those Prophets who were not the direct recipients of any revealed Book (6:115, 157, 158; 3:73, 200; 29:47; 21:11). The clause, therefore, only means that every Prophet has received a Book from God, whether it was revealed to him direct or whether it was revealed to a previous Prophet whose mission he was called upon to serve.

The "difference" referred to in the verse at two separate places signifies two different kinds of disagreement. Before the advent of a Prophet people differ among themselves about false beliefs and idolatrous practices. But after the appearance of the truth, they begin to differ with regard to the truth itself. The advent of a Prophet, however, does not, as may be

215. <sup>a</sup>Do you think that you will enter Heaven while there has not come over you the condition of those who passed away before you? <sup>b</sup>Poverty and

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ<sup>ط</sup> مَسْتَهْمُ الْبِئْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَزُلْزِلُوا

<sup>a</sup>3:143; 9:16. <sup>b</sup>See 2:178.

wrongly imagined, create differences. The differences are already there; they merely assume a new form. But whereas before a Prophet has made his appearance the people, in spite of their differences, look like one people, they become divided into two distinct camps, believers and disbelievers, after he has appeared.

The clause, *out of envy towards one another*, points to the important fact that invariably the root-cause of the rejection of a Prophet is jealousy. Disbelievers cannot reconcile themselves to the idea that an ordinary person from among them, generally inferior to many of them in wealth, power or social status, should be made their teacher and leader. Disbelievers also consider it below their dignity to ally themselves with a community a large majority of whose members are of humble origin, as is often the case with the early followers of Divine Messengers.

The clause, *Now has Allah, by His command, guided believers to the truth in regard to which they (the unbelievers) differed*, refers to the advent of the Holy Prophet who was raised by God with a universal mission to remove the differences of all the peoples of the earth. The expression بِأَمْرِهِ translated as "by His command" may also mean "according

to His eternal decree". In the beginning of the world God willed that the final Law-giving Prophet should come with a universal mission and should constitute, as it were, the zenith of the system of النبوة or prophecy. Says the Holy Prophet "I was a Prophet of God while Adam was yet in the making between the body and the soul" (Tirmidhī).

Viewed collectively, the verse describes five different stages through which mankind has passed: (1) When there was unity among the people, all forming one community. This was in the beginning of the human race. (2) When, with the increase in population and the extension of interests and the complexity of problems confronting man, people began to differ among themselves. (3) When God raised Prophets among different peoples and different countries to show them the right path and revealed His will to the various contending sections. (4) When the very revelation of God sent to remove differences was made a cause of difference by the mischievous people. (5) When God finally raised the Holy Prophet with His last Book and a universal mission, calling upon entire humanity to rally round his banner. Thus a beautiful circle was completed and the world which began with unity was designed to end with it.

afflictions befell them, and they were violently shaken <sup>a</sup>until the Messenger and those who believed along with him said: 'When *will come* the help of Allah?' Yea, surely the help of Allah is nigh.<sup>221</sup>

حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ  
مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ۖ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ  
قَرِيبٌ ﴿٢٢١﴾

<sup>a</sup>12:111.

### 221. Important Words:

زلزلا (violently shaken) is from زلزل (violently shaken) or زل. They say زلزل الله الارض i.e. God made the earth quake violently or put the earth in a state of convulsion or violent motion. زلله means, he put him or it in a state of commotion or agitation or violent motion; he put him in a state of great fear or terror. الزلولة which is the noun-infinitive from زلزل means: (1) violent shaking or commotion; (2) earthquake. The word is also used, especially in its plural form, to denote afflictions, miseries and trials (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

In the preceding two verses God promised believers a reward "without reckoning" and called upon them to strive to bring all the peoples of the world under the banner of Islam so that they might become one people. The fulfilment of this great promise and the attainment of this noble object necessitated unusual sacrifices on the part of the Faithful, to which the verse under comment fittingly draws the attention of Muslims.

Indeed, acceptance of the Message of Islam was no bed of roses, and Muslims were warned that they would have to pass through a fiery

ordeal of trials and tribulations before they could hope to achieve their sublime ideal. Incidentally, they were also told that the sufferings and hardships they had already undergone were nothing as compared with the trials that were yet in store for them. They were being mentally prepared to meet the storm which was brewing in Mecca and which reached its culmination in the Battle of the Ditch.

The word الجنة literally meaning garden and translated here as "Heaven" need not necessarily refer to the Heaven vouchsafed to the Faithful in the Hereafter. The word is also used to express a state of success and prosperity in this very world. Nay, God has definitely promised in the Quran that the righteous would have جنة or Heaven even in this life (55:47). In this sense the word "Heaven" in this verse would refer to the great success and prosperity promised to Muslims in the preceding verse.

The word حتى translated as 'until' also means, so that or in order that. According to the latter signification, the verse would mean that God proves or tries the Prophet and the believers with difficulties and hardships and withholds His help

216. They ask thee what they shall spend. Say: "Whatever of good and abundant wealth you spend should be for parents and near relatives and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, surely Allah knows it well." **222**

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۖ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ  
مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلَّوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ  
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَا  
تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:178; 4:37.

from them so that they may invoke it by earnest prayers and supplication. This is a beautiful way by which God manifests His love for the Prophet and his followers. He delights in treating them like children, wishing them to beg of Him so that He may give them.

The pathetic cry for help embodied in the words, *when will come the help of Allah?* Does not denote despair, because an attitude of despair on the part of a Prophet of God and his followers is inconceivable, being inconsistent with true faith (12:88). The words are simply a form of prayer, a way of earnestly beseeching God to expedite His help, and not an expression denoting despair and disappointment. The reply given by God in the words, *Yea, surely the help of Allah is nigh*, also corroborates this interpretation; for, if the words of the Faithful had been expressive of despair, God would certainly not have answered in that loving manner but would have taken notice of it.

## 222. Important Words:

خير (good and abundant wealth). See 2:181.

اقربين (near relatives) is the plural of

اقرب (derived from قريب) meaning, one nearer; a near relative (Aqrab).

## Commentary:

When the Companions of the Holy Prophet were told that they could not win the pleasure of God and enter Heaven unless they were made to pass through sufferings and afflictions like those that had gone before, they at once signified their readiness to part with their wealth and property in the cause of God and asked the Holy Prophet to let them know what they should spend in order to win the pleasure of God and attain spiritual progress. They did not wait for the threatened trials to actually overtake them, but were prepared to make every kind of sacrifice in advance. They simply wanted to be told what form their sacrifice should take.

In reply to their eager question, God's reply also indicates a sort of eagerness, as if He meant to impart to the Faithful the relevant commandment in its entirety, without waiting for any further question on their part; for whereas their question related only "what" they should spend, God's answer goes a step

217. "Fighting is ordained for you, though it is repugnant to you; but it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you. Allah knows *all things*, and you know not.<sup>223</sup>

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ  
وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ  
لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ  
لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>8:6.

further, describing also "on whom" the money is to be spent. As to the question, what is to be spent should be (1) well-acquired and (2) abundant. In moments of great national need, there can be no hope of success unless people spend freely and generously. But as free and generous expenditure carries with it the danger of weak people resorting to acquiring wealth by unfair means, therefore the condition about the money being "good" has been added.

As to the other part of the anticipated question, i.e. on whom should the money be spent, the Quran says that money should be spent *on parents and near relatives* (lit. near ones) *and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer*. The five classes include all such persons as generally stand in need of help. The two first-mentioned classes include relatives, neighbours and friends who go to form the group that immediately surrounds a man and must claim his first attention, owing to personal relationship or personal contact. Then follow two classes that deserve help owing to their particular circumstance, orphans being without anyone to support them and the needy without any means of

support. Lastly comes the wayfarer, whose claim consists in his being a stranger with no friend, no relative and no supporter. By pointing out these five classes as deserving of help, the Quran desires to hint that unless the entire community, including those who come to stay with them temporarily, is prepared to fight in the cause of Allah and unless the well-to-do classes help the weaker ones in their preparation for the national struggle, Muslims cannot present a united front nor can their efforts bring about the desired result. Each and every person must gird up his loins to contribute his fullest possible share, and those who cannot do so for want of means must receive help from others who can afford such help.

### 223. Important Words:

كره (repugnant) is the noun-infinitive from كره i.e. he disliked. كره means, a thing which is disliked; a thing which one is required to do against his wish or liking (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

In 2:215, God warned Muslims that in order to reach the promised goal they must pass through an ordeal of

**R. 27.**

218. They ask thee about fighting in the Sacred Month. Say: 'Fighting therein is *a great transgression*, but to hinder men from the way of Allah, and to be ungrateful to Him and the Sacred Mosque, and to turn out

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ<sup>ط</sup>  
قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ<sup>ط</sup> وَصَدَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ  
اللَّهِ وَكَفَرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ<sup>ث</sup> وَإِخْرَاجُ  
أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ<sup>ج</sup> وَالْفِتْنَةُ

poverty, affliction and violent shaking. In conformity with the ordeal of poverty, verse 2:216 called upon them to be prepared to make great monetary sacrifices. Now in the verse under comment, God refers to the ordeal of affliction and violent shakings by drawing the attention of the Faithful to the menace of war surrounding them. As, however, Muslims were averse to war, the verse also enjoins them to put implicit trust in the guidance of Allah: for, *it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you*.

But the aversion of the Holy Prophet's Companions from war was not due to cowardice. They did not dislike war because they thought that they were few in number or because they were not properly equipped. History gives the direct lie to all such insinuations. Muslims hated war, because they did not like to shed human blood; also because they thought that a peaceful atmosphere was more conducive to the propagation of Islam than a state of war, for the obvious reason that atmosphere of peace gave disbelievers more opportunities for dispassionate consideration of the noble teachings of Islam.

But it was too late. The leaders of the disbelievers had gone too far in their evil designs against Islam and were bent upon extirpating the New Faith. It was evidently a war of self-defence, and he who shirks a war of self-defence, commits an act of suicide (22:40, 41). Thus the verse constitutes an eloquent testimony to the love of peace of the Holy Prophet's Companions and a convincing repudiation of the mischievous accusation that it was for the sake of booty or for spreading their faith by force that the early Muslims resorted to arms.

The clause, *it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you*, points to a very important principle, i.e. that errors of judgement mostly result from two causes: (1) abuse of the sentiment of love; and (2) abuse of the sentiment of dislike or hatred. One should, therefore, be particularly careful about one's judgement when one is swayed by either of these two sentiments. They undermine dispassionate thinking as nothing else does. Elsewhere the Quran gives a still clearer warning to Muslims to beware of the abuse of the sentiment of love and hatred (64:15, 16 & 5:9).

its people therefrom, is *a* greater sin with Allah; and <sup>a</sup>'persecution is worse than killing.' And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can. And <sup>b</sup>whoso from among you turns back from his faith and dies while he is a disbeliever, it is they <sup>c</sup>whose works shall be vain in this world and the next. These are the inmates of the Fire and therein shall they abide.<sup>224</sup>

أَكْبَرَ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۖ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ  
يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ  
إِنْ اسْتَطَاعُوا ۖ وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ  
دِينِهِ فِيمَتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ  
أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ  
أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:192. <sup>b</sup>3:84, 91; 4:138; 5:55; 47:26. <sup>c</sup>3:23; 7:148; 18:106.

## 224. Important Words:

كبير (great transgression) really stands for ذنب كبير i.e. a great sin or great transgression or great offence. اكبر is in the comparative degree and means, a greater sin, etc.

صد (to hinder) is the infinitive from صد. They say صداه i.e. he prevented him; he turned him back. صد عنه اوامره means, he kept back from it. Thus the word is both transitive and intransitive. صد, therefore, means: (1) to hinder or to prevent; (2) a hindrance or a barrier; (3) a mountain or a wall, etc., because it serves as a barrier (Aqrab).

يرتد (turn you back) and يرتد (turns back) are both derived from رد. They say رده i.e. he turned him back; and ارتد i.e. he himself turned back. ارتد عن الاسلام means, he turned back from Islam and reverted to a state of disbelief. مرتد means, one who turns back from

his religion, particularly from Islam; one who apostatizes (Tāj).

حبط البعير (shall be in vain). حبط means, the stomach of the camel became inflated and his belly became bound by eating unwholesome food. حبط عمله means: (1) his work or deed became null and void and went for nothing; (2) his work or deed became evil and corrupt. حبط دمه means, his blood went unavenged. حبط ماء البئر means, the water of the well receded and went down never to return to its original level (Aqrab & Lane).

## Commentary:

The words translated as "to be ungrateful to Him and the Sacred Mosque" may also be rendered as "to be ungrateful to Him and to hinder men from the Sacred Mosque".

The Quran has already explained that if disbelievers violate the sanctity of a sacred month, Muslims may also



retaliate in a sacred month; for thus only can the sanctity of a sacred thing be safeguarded (2:195).

The present verse provides a further reason for defending Islam, if need be, in a sacred month. Disbelievers, particularly those of Mecca, had violated the sanctity of things far more sacred than a "sacred month"—they were trying forcibly to turn men from the way of God; they were preventing people from approaching the Sacred Mosque and they had forced the Muslim dwellers of Mecca to flee from it. This was a form of persecution which was certainly much more heinous than fighting in a Sacred Month.

Commentators generally state, and in fact there are also traditions to the effect, that once the Holy Prophet sent one of his Companions, named ‘Abdullāh bin Jahsh, to bring news about a party of the Quraish proceeding to Mecca. When ‘Abdullāh and his comrades reached a place called *Nakhlah*, they met a small party proceeding to Mecca. Guided by his own judgement and without any instruction to that effect from the Prophet, ‘Abdullāh attacked the party, killing one of them and capturing two. The date was doubtful, some considering it to be as one of the Sacred Month and others as not. When the news reached Mecca, the Quraish took advantage of the doubt as regards date and clamoured that the Muslims had violated the Sacred Month. The verse under comment was revealed on that occasion (Ṭabarī, Hishām & Zurqānī).

The verse acknowledges the sanctity of the Sacred Months and

considers it an act of sin and transgression knowingly to fight in a sacred month, but forcefully points out that the sanctities which disbelievers were violating were far more worthy of safeguarding. Disbelievers were forcibly preventing people from accepting Islam. They did not allow Muslims to approach the Sacred Mosque and they had mercilessly turned the Prophet and his followers out of their homes.

The verse should not be understood to imply that Muslims did start a fight in a sacred month, it only purports to bring home to disbelievers the fact that in view of their persistent violation of highly sacred thing, it does not lie in their mouth to accuse Muslim of violating the sanctity of a sacred month.

The clause *it is they whose works shall be vain in this world and the next* does not mean that everything that a renegade from Islam, or, for that matter, everything that a disbeliever, does will go for nothing and produce no result. The clause only means that such actions of the renegades as they might do to weaken the cause of Islam in this world as well as those of their actions which they might perform in opposition to the teaching of Islam in order to win the pleasure of God in the world to come, will all be in vain. Thus the clause does not refer to such good actions as a person may perform in the state of unbelief; for, as the Quran expressly states, these must have their reward (99:8) which may either take the form of the acceptance of Islam or that of the lightening of punishment. The Holy Prophet is reported to have

219. Those who believe and "those who migrate and strive hard in the cause of Allah, it is these who hope for Allah's mercy; and Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful. 225

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا  
وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوَلَّكَ يَرْجُونَ  
رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢١٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>8:75; 9:20.

said about his uncle Abū Ṭālib that on account of the good treatment the latter extended to him, he is likely to be only lightly punished for his non-acceptance of Islam (Bukhārī). On another occasion when Ḥakīm bin Hizām, a nephew of his wife Khadījah, asked the Prophet whether he would get any reward for the good deeds he did before he accepted Islam, the Holy Prophet said, "your very acceptance of Islam is a reward thereof" (Bukhārī).

The clause, *their works shall be vain in this world and the next*, also signifies that if such men as apostatize from Islam had not done so, their deeds would have brought them the great reward promised to Muslims both in this world and the next, but by apostatizing from Islam they had totally deprived themselves of this twofold reward.

Finally, the clause, *and they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can*, throws a flood of light on the attitude of disbelievers towards Muslim. They were not only the first to begin hostilities, but had also vowed not to cease fighting until Islam had been totally wiped out from Arabia and not a soul remained to call himself a Muslim. This clear testimony of the

Quran should be an eye-opener for those who accuse Muslims of being aggressors in their early struggle against disbelievers. The words, *if they can*, are highly eulogistic of the Companions of the Holy Prophet. Do what they could, disbelievers would never be able to turn back Muslims from their faith. Their love for Islam was too deep to be extirpated by persecution however severe and bitter it might be.

### 225. Important Words:

هاجروا (migrated) is derived from هجر. They say هجر الشيء i.e. (1) he cut it or he severed it; (2) he avoided it or kept away from it, or he gave it up. هاجر means, he left one place to settle in another (Aqrab). The word is particularly used about one who leaves a place where religion is persecuted and goes to a place where there is no such persecution, especially to a place where there exists means of serving and supporting the faith. The early Muslims who migrated from Mecca to Medina were known as مهاجرين i.e. those who left Mecca and settled in Medina with the intention of helping the cause of Islam.

جاهدوا (strive hard) is derived from جهد which means, he strove or laboured hard, taking extraordinary

220. They ask thee concerning "wine and the game of hazard. Say: 'In both there is great sin and also *some* advantages for men; but their sin is greater than their advantage.' And they ask thee what they should spend. Say: 'Spend What you can spare.' Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to you that you may reflect,<sup>226</sup>

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا ۚ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۖ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٢٠﴾

pains. جهاد في الامر means, he used his utmost power in prosecuting the affair. جاهد العدو means, he fought with the enemy exerting his utmost effort to repel him, his enemy doing the like. جهار means, exerting one's utmost power in contending with an object of disapprobation; and this is of three kinds, namely, (1) with a visible enemy (2) with Satan, and (3) with one's self (Lane).

يرجى (who hope) is derived from رجا which gives twofold meaning. They say رجا الشيء meaning: (1) he hoped to get the thing; (2) he was afraid of the thing (Aqrab). When used in the sense of hoping, it is used on occasions when the thing hoped for is likely to afford pleasure (Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

The verse holds out the promise to Muslims, and they are indeed buoyed up with the hope, that though now they are beset with great difficulties and unusual hardships, the time is fast approaching when all difficulties would disappear and they would become heirs to God's mercy both in

this world and the next.

As the context shows, the words, *those who believe*, occurring in the verse refer to such of the believers as resided in Medina and had not been called upon to migrate. Thus the verse mentions two classes of believers who can hope to get Allah's mercy; (1) believers resident in Medina, i.e. the Helpers, who engaged themselves in جهاد or holy war against the forces of Satan; and (2) Migrants from Mecca who were also engaged in such war. The words, *Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful*, have been added to point out that Allah will forgive the above-mentioned two classes of believers their sins and shortcomings which will not stand in the way of their winning God's mercy, provided they remain sincere in their faith and continue striving hard in the cause of Allah, for, as the Quran elsewhere explains, the good works of a man drive away his evil ones (11:115).

### 226. Important Words:

الخمر (wine) is the noun-infinitive

from خمر. They say خمر الشيء meaning, he veiled or covered up the thing. خمر الشهادة means, he concealed the evidence. خمر العجين means, he leavened the dough and left it till it became well fermented. خامرة means, it became mixed or blended with it; it infected or pervaded it. A veil worn by a woman is called خمار because it screens or covers her face and head. Wine is called خمر because it covers or obscures or infects the intellect or the senses, or because it agitates and excites the brain so as to make it uncontrolled. The word is specific for wine prepared from grapes but is also used generally (Aqrab & Lane).

الميسر (game of hazard) is derived from يسر i.e. he became docile and submissive. يسرت المرأة means, the woman was easily delivered of the child. ايسر الرجل means, the man became well off. يسرفلان means, such a one played a game of hazard or a game of chance, i.e. he gambled. Thus the primary meaning of the word is to get a thing easily and thereby become well off. A game of chance or a game of hazard is called ميسر because by means of such games people seek to become rich easily and quickly without undergoing the trouble of earning with work and labour. The word الميسر is used to indicate (1) any game of hazard or game of chance; (2) a game of hazard played by the Arabs with headless arrows; (3) play for stakes and wages (Lisān & Mufradāt).

اثم (sin) is the noun-infinitive from اثم meaning, he did what was unlawful. اثم means: (1) that which is unlawful (Aqrab); (2) that which keeps back a person from what is

good (Mufradāt); (3) punishment of sins and evil actions (Lane).

عفا (spare) is derived from عفا. They say عفا الشيء i.e. the thing became long and abundant. عفو means: (1) what exceeds or remains over and above one's requirements. (2) the best portion of a thing (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

While dealing with the subject of war, the Quran fittingly turns to the subject of wine and gambling which are directly related to war.

It was customary among Arabs in times of war to cast lots in the name of a few wealthy persons, and those in whose name the lots were drawn were bound to feed the army and supply it with wine. This is how the Arabs defrayed the expenses of war. So when Muslims were called upon to take arms, they naturally enquired of the Holy Prophet about the legality of this peculiar way of meeting the expenses of war and about the use of wine also, which was considered essential to produce a state of reckless courage in the fighters so as to make them blind to all consequences. Islam declared both these practices unlawful because their harm was greater than their advantage. The conviction of faith had infused into the hearts of believers far greater and nobler courage than the blind daring engendered by drinking. Similarly, the expenses of war were to be met in a fairer and more respectable manner than the casting of lots. The burden must fall on all according to their means and must come through willing and eager contributions by the faithful.

The clause, *their sin is greater than their advantage*, embodies a very important principle. A thing should not be adopted simply because it contains some advantage nor should a thing be condemned simply because it is harmful in certain respects. On the contrary, both sides should be carefully weighed and a thing should be condemned only if its harm outweighs its advantage. It is in fact a great characteristic of Islam that it never condemns a thing wholesale but frankly and freely admits even the smallest good that may be found in it. Islam prohibits certain things not because it considers them to be devoid of all good, for there is nothing in the world which is wholly bad, but because their evil outweighs their good. This is why, while prohibiting the use of intoxicants and games of chance because of their great harm, Islam has not failed to acknowledge the few advantages they possess.

It is worthy of note that of all religions, Islam alone has forbidden the use of wine. In Hinduism, drinking forms an essential part of certain religious ceremonies. Judaism does not seem to prohibit drinking, because nowhere has the Bible declared it to be unlawful; while according to the New Testament, the very first miracle which Jesus showed was that he turned water into wine for the use of a marriage party (John 2:7-9).

Attempts have been made during the ages by social reformers, and even the help of legislation has been enlisted in some countries, to put an end to wine-drinking. But all such attempts have so far failed. The only

experiment on record which met with complete success in this direction was that made in Arabia more than thirteen hundred years ago. A whole people steeped in drinking became absolute teetotallers by the mere declaration by the Prophet that God had forbidden drinking. This constitutes no small testimony to the great hold that Islam had come to possess on the minds of the unlettered and unruly Arabs, and to the wonderful transformation it had brought about in their lives.

From the meaning of the word *خمر* (wine) as given above under Important Words it should not be understood that Islam prohibits the use of only such quantity of wine as may make one drunk. The Holy Prophet has made it definitely clear that even small doses of such things as may intoxicate one when used in larger doses are unlawful (Tirmidhī).

When the principal means hitherto employed in Arabia for meeting the expenses of war, i.e. by casting lots, was prohibited, the question naturally arose as to how the expenses of war were to be met. Believers, realizing that they would themselves have to meet these expenses, hastened to inquire of the Holy Prophet as to how much they would have to contribute towards the expenses of war. In reply to their query they were told that they should spend *عفو* i.e. what may be spared after meeting the necessities of life. The word *عفو* by virtue of its twofold connotation, given under Important Words above, applies to two different classes of persons. Ordinary believers are required to spend what remains after their needs

have been met, i.e. what they can spare; and the higher class of believers are expected to go ahead and spend the best portion of their possessions. If, however, the clause be applied collectively to all believers, it would mean, that in times of war, they should retain for themselves only such portion of their possessions as may suffice to meet their bare necessities of life. The balance should be spent in the cause of God. This is what God wanted them to do. Actually, however, some of the Companions spent even more than that. For instance, when the Holy Prophet appealed for funds for the campaign of Tabūk, Abū Bakr brought his entire possessions and laid them at the feet of his Master. When asked how much he had retained for himself and his family and how much he had brought to be spent in Allah's cause, Abū Bakr replied that he had brought all that he possessed and that nothing remained in his house except the name of Allah (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Manāqib* & *Zurqānī*).

Finally, a word about the sin or harm of wine and gambling, as mentioned in the verse under comment, appears to be called for. Though Islam was the first to prohibit the use of intoxicants and games of chance, the world now appears to be agreed on condemning these two evils which so deeply affect not only the physical but also the moral and spiritual condition of man. Here are some quotations in which non-Muslim writers have forcefully pointed out the harmful effects of wine:

(1) "Alcoholism is an important factor in the causation of disease; and

in all diseases alcoholics are bad patients. In epidemics the mortality among drinkers is excessive; and the general power of resistance to disease, injury, and fatigue is diminished...Alcoholism lessens the chance of life; the English life-insurance companies found that the presumptive length of life of non-drinkers was about twice that of drinkers...The close relationship of alcoholism and crime is well known and the statistics of Baer, Kurella, Gallavardin and Sichart show that from 25 to 85 per cent of all malefactors are drunkards. The rate of suicide varies with the general rate of consumption of alcohol in different countries...

"The evil effects of alcoholism are evident in the drunkard's posterity...Epilepsy, insanity, idiocy and various forms of physical, mental, and moral degeneracy are very disproportionately prevalent among the offsprings of alcoholics" (Jew. Enc. i. 333-334).

(2) "The effects of consumption of alcohol are almost all due to its action upon the nervous system. Thus the immediate sensation of well-being is due to the flushing of the skin, suppressing temporarily the sense of chill, and to the fact that the sensibility to minor pains and inconveniences becomes blunted; whilst with larger doses the diminution of the power of self-control and sense of personal responsibility gives rise to excitability. In the secondary stage the fineness of the senses (hearing, touch, taste and vision) is affected, and this gives rise to an inability to

control bodily movements such as facial expression. In the advanced stage of drunkenness, the intellectual processes of judgement and control are suspended." (Enc. Brit. 14th Edition, i. 540).

(3) "Alcohol is a poison for protoplasm, that is, for the soft plastic material which is the essential constituent of every one of the minute cells that make up living organisms, whether animal or vegetable. Its poisonous effect in very dilute solution is easily shown on lowly organisms...

"The nerve cells of the brain, the most highly organised and delicate of the tissues, very early show the effect of alcohol. Many of the test observers of their own mental processes, such as Helmholtz and Huxley, have expressed themselves strongly as to the harmful effect of minute doses of alcohol on brain work. It would seem that the 'stimulating' effect is really due to the paralysis of the very highest nerve-centres, so that cheerfulness, wit, and recklessness have free play. Large numbers of psychometric experiments under conditions of the greatest accuracy prove that alcohol, in small dietetic doses, exercises a distinctly paralysing effect on the working of the brain. Some mental processes are quickened for a short time, and then a retarding effect shows itself, which is prolonged and much more than cancels the apparent beneficial result...

"There is universal testimony as to the close relationship between excessive drinking and breaches of the moral law and the law of the State. This is a direct consequence of

the paralysis of the higher faculties, intellectual and moral, and the resulting free play given to the lower inclinations" (Enc. Rel. Eth, i. 299-301).

As to the harm caused by gambling the following quotation would suffice:

"The vicious tendency of gambling has never been called in question. Lord Beaconsfield spoke of it as 'a vast engine of national demoralization'...In 12 years (1895-6 to 1906-7) there were 156 suicides or attempted suicides in England assigned to this cause, as well as 719 cases of theft or embezzlement and 442 bankruptcies. In view of these facts, it is not surprising that, in all civilized countries, gambling is subjected to definite legislative restraints...It is, as Herbert Spencer says, a kind of action by which pleasure is obtained at the cost of pain to another. The happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser. This kind of action, therefore, is essentially anti-social; it sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and so produces a general deterioration of character. It is a habit intrinsically savage...In an atmosphere of brotherhood no form of gambling could exist...But the immorality of gambling may be argued on higher grounds than a calculation of pleasure.

"(a) Every gambling transaction involves a transfer of property in one shape or another. When the gambler is asked why he stakes his money on a game or a race, his reply is, 'To add an interest to the game'. The interest thus added is, simply stated, the interest of acquisition. If the real object were, as is claimed, merely the

221. Yes, that you may reflect upon this world and the next. And they ask thee concerning <sup>a</sup>the orphans. Say: 'Promotion of their welfare is *an act of* great goodness. And if you intermix with them, they are your brethren. And Allah knows the mischief-maker from the reformer. And if Allah had willed, He would have put you to hardship. Surely, Allah is *Mighty and Wise.*'<sup>227</sup>

فِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ  
الْيَتَامَى ۖ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۚ وَإِنْ  
تَخَالَطَوْهُمْ فَإِنْ خَوَّانُكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ  
الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
لَا عُنْتَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٢١﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:128; 89:18; 93:10; 107:3.

sport and the excitement, then men might just as well wager counters, or, for the matter of that, agree to hand over all winnings to public charities. But this is not done. The transfer of property, in one shape or another, is essential to the act. There are only three ways in which property can be legitimately acquired—by gift, by labour, and by exchange. Gambling stands outside all of these.

"(b) Its motive is, however, carefully disguised covetousness. It is an attempt to get property without paying the price for it. It is a violation of the law of equivalents. It is a kind of robbery by mutual agreement; but it is still robbery, just as duelling, which is murder by mutual agreement, is still treated as murder. It is begotten of covetousness; it leads to idleness.

"(c) It is, moreover, an appeal to chance. If in any contest skill comes in, odds are given or handicaps

arranged so as to equalize the chances as far as possible. To make chance the arbiter of conduct is to subvert the moral order and stability of life.

"(d) It concentrates attention upon lucre, and thereby withdraws attention from worthier objects of life" (Enc. Rel. Eth. vi. pp. 165-166).

### 227. Important Words:

اليتامى (orphans) is the plural of يتيم which is derived from يَتَمُّ meaning he fell short of a thing, feeling weak and tired; he lost his father in childhood. Thus يتيم is one whose father has died and who has not yet attained the age of puberty, which, according to Islamic jurisprudence, is 18 years. The word يتيم is also used about a thing which is without equal (Aqrah & Mufradāt).

تخالطوهم (intermix with them) is derived from خالط. They say خلط الشيء بالشيء i.e. he mixed up one thing with the other. خالطه means, he mixed or mingled or associated with him; he



mixed or joined with him in his affairs; he became co-partner with him. خالط قلبه هم means, anxiety pervaded his heart (Aqrab & Lane).

اعتكمت (put you to hardship) is derived from عنت which means, he fell into difficulty or hardship. اعنته means, he put him to hardship; he burdened him with a task that was beyond his power (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The opening words of this verse apparently seem to be misplaced, for they are connected not with the following words of the verse in which they are placed, but with the concluding words of the previous one. The complete sentence, therefore, should read like this, "thus Allah makes His commandments clear to you that you may reflect upon this world and the next". If read like this, the clause would mean that God has refrained from issuing a definite commandment with regard to war expenditure and has simply ordered you to retain such portion of your possessions as you may require for your worldly needs and spend the balance in the cause of religion so that you may be trained to think over and judge the comparative value of this world and the next and act accordingly. The words, "upon this world and the next" have been separated from the preceding words to provide a pause with the object of impressing the importance of the matter on the mind of the listener or reader.

As Quranic verses follow a natural order—an order prompted and followed by the innermost nature of

the addressee—this verse follows in the wake of the verses dealing with war. As the war leaves behind orphans, this verse lays down basic instructions as to how they should be treated and looked after. Muslims are told that the bringing up of orphans is a very delicate affair and an important social duty. Orphans should be brought up in the manner most conducive to their greatest good, i.e. their physical, moral and spiritual welfare. They should be treated as members of the family; and their property properly looked after and steps taken to augment it. The words, *and if you intermix with them, they are your brethren*, signify not only permission but exhortation. The exhortation lies in the word "brethren" which is meant to point to Muslims to allow orphans to live as members of their family, this being not only wise and humane but also based on considerations of convenience. If orphans had been directed to be kept aloof and their property managed on a strictly legal basis, it would have, in most cases, entailed a good deal of unnecessary inconvenience and trouble for both parties concerned.

The words, *Allah knows the mischief-maker from the reformer*, serve as a stern warning to the guardians of orphans. Anything they do is sure to come to the knowledge of God. Nay, God knows even the hidden things of the human heart. So they should beware of playing the part of mischief-makers in the garb of reformers.

God's attributes of "Powerful" and "Wise" placed at the end of the verse

222. And <sup>a</sup>marry not idolatrous women until they believe; even a believing bond-woman is better than an idolatress, although she may *highly* please you. And give not *believing women* in marriage to idolaters until they believe; *even* a believing slave is better than an idolater, although he may *highly* please you. These call to the Fire, but Allah calls to Heaven and to forgiveness by His command. And He makes His Signs clear to the people that they may remember.<sup>228</sup>

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يُوْمِنُوْا  
وَلَا مَمْلَءَةً مِّنْهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ  
اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ  
يُوْمِنُوْا ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ  
وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكُمْ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْعُوْنَ اِلَى  
النَّارِ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْا اِلَى الْجَنَّةِ  
وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ وَيُبَيِّنُ اٰيٰتِهٖ لِلنَّاسِ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٢٨﴾

<sup>228</sup>60:11.

contain a general admonition to guardians of orphans to be very careful about their dealings with them. They should not delude themselves with the idea that, being weak and not yet possessed of proper understanding, the orphans are entirely at their mercy and that they can treat them as they like. For, if orphans are not strong and wise, God certainly is, and He would call them to account if they behaved unkindly or dishonestly towards these helpless and friendless creatures of His. By mentioning God's attributes of "Powerful" and "Wise" the Quran also means to exhort Muslims to look after orphans in such a way and give them such good education and training as should help them to grow strong and wise and become useful members of the community.

## 228. Important Words:

تَنْكِحُوا—*tankihū* (marry) and تَنْكِحُوا—*tunkihū* (give in marriage) are both derived from نَكَحَ. They say نَكَحَ المطر الأرض i.e. the rain fell on the earth and became mixed with the soil. نَكَحَ امرأة means, he married a woman. نَكَحَ زوجته means, he went in unto his wife. نَكَحَ المرأة means, the woman married a man. اَنْكَحَ المرأة زيداً means, he gave the woman in marriage to Zaid. Thus نَكَحَ means, both (1) marriage and (2) coition with one's wife. The Quran itself uses the word in the latter sense in 2:231 (Aqrah & Mufradāt).

مُشْرِك (an idolater) is derived from شَرَكَ. They say شَرَكَهْ فِيْهِ meaning, he shared the thing with him; he became his co-partner in it. اَشْرَكَهْ فِي الْاَمْرِ means, he made him his co-partner in the

affair. *اشرك اليه* means, he attributed to, or set up with, him a co-partner. *شريك* means, a sharer, or a co-partner, or an associate, or a colleague, Thus *مشارك* means, one who attributes to, or sets up with, God a co-partner or co-partners, allotting to the latter all or some of the attributes of the former. *شرك* means, attributing to, or setting up with, God co-partners idolatry (Lane). *شرك* is of two kinds: *شرك عظيم* (the greater idolatry) signifying belief in a person or thing as being co-partner with God, and *شرك صغير* (the lesser idolatry), i.e. ascribing to some person or thing any of the attributes of God without looking upon him or it as His co-partner (Mufradāt). Other relevant terms are *شرك جلي* i.e. manifest idolatry, and *شرك خفي* i.e. hidden idolatry; and *شرك في الذات* i.e. believing one to be a co-partner with God in His person, and *شرك في الصفات* i.e. ascribing any of the attributes of God to someone. The term *مشركين* (idolaters) is generally confined to such peoples as set up co-partners with God and do not believe in any revealed Book.

### Commentary:

The question of marriage with "idolatrous women" is intimately connected with the subject of war, for it is during war that Muslims, being away from their homes for a considerable time, are liable to be tempted to contract marriages with such women. This the Quran strictly disallows in the verse under comment, which also forbids the giving of believing women in marriage to idolatrous men. The prohibition is based on religions as

well as on moral and social grounds. An idolatrous husband is bound to exercise an extremely baneful influence not only on his wife but on his children as well, whereas an idolatrous wife is sure to ruin the early training of the offspring. Moreover, when a believing man has an idolatrous wife or *vice versa*, their ideas, beliefs, culture and outlook on life being widely different, there cannot possibly be harmony or concord between the two and their life is sure to become miserable, if they possess any attachment whatever for their religion. Again *Islam*, (submission to One God) and *shirk* (setting up partners with God) being poles apart, there can be no real contact or permanent intermixing between the two. In this connection, it may be noted that Islam allows, though it certainly does not encourage, the marriage of a Muslim with a woman belonging to the People of the Book who are decidedly nearer to Islam (5:6). But of this we will speak when we come to the relevant verses.

The words, *until they believe*, appear to be redundant at first sight; for, if marriage with an idolatrous person is prohibited, it is evident that this prohibition will automatically cease to operate when an idolatrous person converted to Islam. On deeper thought, however, the words, *until they believe*, prove to be most rightly placed. They have indeed been used to remind Muslims of their duty pertaining to the conversion of idolatrous people to Islam. The words also contain a veiled prophecy that the time was fast coming when

**R. 28.**

223. And they ask thee concerning menstruation. Say: 'It is a harmful thing, so keep away from women during menstruation, and go not in unto them until they are clean. But when they have cleansed themselves, go in unto them as Allah has commanded you. Allah loves those who turn to Him and loves those who keep themselves clean.'<sup>229</sup>

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ ۖ قُلْ هُوَ آذَىٰ  
فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ ۖ وَلَا  
تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهَرْنَ ۚ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ  
فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

idolatry would become extinct in Arabia.

The expression **بِأَذْنِهِ** (by His command) when used with regard to a certain action of God signifies, according to the Quranic idiom, that God has provided or intends to provide extraordinary means for the accomplishment of the thing aimed at. So is the case here, the clause signifying that Allah's call to Heaven and to forgiveness is not an empty announcement but that He has made special arrangements to bring about the desired end. It is further interesting to note that the word **جَنَّةٌ** and **مَغْفِرَةٌ** both convey the sense of covering up a thing, the idea being that God's favours and His forgiveness will be so liberal and so generous as to cover or overwhelm believers.

**229. Important Words:**

**المحيض** (menstruation) is derived from **حَاضَ**. They say **حَاضَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ** i.e. the woman menstruated; blood came

forth from her womb or uterus at the known time and in the known manner. Thus **مَحِيضٌ** means, (1) menstruation, i.e. the monthly course; (2) time of menstruation; (3) place of menstruation (Lane & Mufradât). According to some, the word which means a tank or a place where water collects, is also derived from the same root though the central letter of the root is different (Lane).

**آذَى** (harmful thing) is the infinitive-noun from **آذَى** meaning, he came to harm, or he was annoyed. **آذَى** means, he or it caused a harm. **آذَى** means, a harmful thing; a disagreeable thing; an annoyance; a hurt; a thing held to be unclean or filthy; a slight evil less than what is termed **ضَرَرٌ** (Tāj).

**اعْتَزَلُوا** (keep away from) is derived from **عَزَلَ** **عَزَلَهُ عَنْهُ** means, he removed him or it from that (Aqrab). **اعْتَزَلَ الشَّيْءُ** or **اعْتَزَلَ عَنْهُ** means, he kept away from the thing (Aqrab).

**يَطْهَرْنَ** (they are clean) and **تَطْهَرْنَ** (they have cleansed themselves) and **الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ** (who keep themselves clean) are all

224. Your wives are a tilth for you; so approach your tilth when and how you like and send ahead *some good* for yourselves; and fear Allah and know that you shall meet Him; and give good tidings to those who obey.<sup>230</sup>

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ  
أَيَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۗ  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُّلَاقُوهُ ۗ  
وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

derived from طهر which means, he or it became clean or free from dirt or filth, etc.; or he or it became pure. طهرت المرأة means, the woman became clean from the menstrual discharge, i.e. her flow of menses stopped. طهرت المرأة means, she became cleansed or purified by washing herself. اظهر (ittahara) is like تهر giving the same meaning, i.e. he became cleansed or he kept himself clean (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

After laying down, in brief, the law about intermarriage, reference to marital relations and conjugal obligations became necessary. The verse under comment indicates that coition or sexual intercourse with one's wife is not permissible during menses, for such intercourse would be harmful for both parties. Coition becomes permissible when menses cease, but as a further precaution the husband should wait till the wife has washed herself by taking a bath.

The command referred to in the words *go in unto them as Allah has commanded you* is contained in, *and seek what Allah has ordained for You* (2:188), hinting that coition with one's wife should be in a manner productive of issue. A further hint to the above is contained in the

following verse.

The words, *and go not in unto them* (lit. do not go near them) *until they are clean*, do not mean that the husband should keep away from his wife completely and in no case go near her. The Holy Prophet's sayings as well as his practice belie that inference. The expression simply refers to coition and does not debar other forms of loving approach.

The concluding word "متطهرين" i.e. *those who keep themselves clean* has been put in the masculine gender, because *firstly* the use of the masculine gender generally includes and extends to females as well; and *secondly* because by using this word the Quran means to hint that if men go in unto their wives while they are unclean, they are sure to make themselves unclean too. *Thirdly* this word also hints that though it becomes lawful for a man to go in unto his wife after the monthly flow has ceased, yet it is better for him to wait till the woman has properly washed herself, for God loves those who are more careful about cleanliness.

### 230. Important Words:

حَرْث (tilth). See 2: 206.

إِذَا (how and when) means: (1) how; (2) when; and (3) where (Aqrab).

قَدَّمَ (send ahead) is derived from قَدَم meaning, he came or stepped forward. قَدَّمَ (qaddama) means, be sent forward or sent ahead; he put forward; he offered. قَدَّمَ لِنَفْسِهِ means, he did good or evil that will in future bear good or bad fruit for himself. قَدَّمَ عَلَى غَيْرِهِ means, he preferred him to others. قَدَّمَ لَهُ الثَّمَنَ means, he paid him the price in advance (Aqrab). The Quran uses this expression to point out that whatever good or evil deed a man does, serves like a seed to bear a future crop. No action is ever lost.

مُؤْمِنِينَ (those who obey) is derived from آمَنَ meaning: (1) he believed; (2) he obeyed (Aqrab). Here it gives the latter meaning. For a fuller discussion of this word see 2:4.

### Commentary:

This verse constitutes an eloquent testimony to the inimitably pure and dignified language of the Quran. An extremely delicate subject has been dealt with in a most decent and discreet manner, and the whole philosophy of marriage and conjugal relations has been given in one brief sentence, i.e. *Your wives are a tilth for you*. A woman is indeed like a tilth in which the seed of progeny is sown. The expression has a twofold significance depending on the meaning of the words اتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ (approach your tilth). If approaching the tilth means coition, then the expression *approach your tilth how you like* would signify that: (1) you should go in unto your wife in a manner suited to her capacity as a tilth and in no other manner; and (2)

that both of you should try to keep your hearts pure at the time of coition so that the issue of the process may also share that purity. Says the Holy Prophet, "When the husband goes in unto his wife, they should both pray to God saying, 'Our Lord, keep both of us away from Satan; and if Thou grant us an issue, keep that also away from him' " (Muslim *Kitābun-Nikāḥ*).

On the contrary, if "approaching the tilth" means selecting and dealing with the wife, the expression *approach your tilth how you like* would mean: (1) That you should select a wife who is best suited as a tilth, i.e. (a) she should be *ولود* viz. capable of producing children and not barren; (b) she should be healthy, capable of producing healthy children; (c) she should be well qualified to give good training to the children; and (d) she should be *ودود* i.e. of loving nature so that there may reign an atmosphere of love and harmony in the house and the children may benefit by it. (2) That you should look after and treat your wife well so that her life may be happy and contented and she may become best disposed to bring up the children well. (3) That you should keep yourselves also in a state of good physical and moral health so that your seed for your tilth may also be healthy in every respect.

A wise husbandman selects the best soil, prepares the best tilth, secures the best seed, and chooses the best time and manner of sowing it. So should you, for on the harvest which you are to reap in the form of children depends not only your own but also your community's entire

225. And make not Allah a target for your oaths that you may *thereby* abstain from doing good and acting righteously and making peace between men. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.<sup>231</sup>

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ  
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾

future. It is to this supreme fact that the clause, *and send ahead some good for yourselves*, so pointedly refers. In short, the likening of woman to tilth throws a flood of light on the morality of eugenics and sex. But the real basis of all happiness and progress is the fear of God and in the words, *fear Allah and know that you shall meet Him*, the Quran warns the Faithful never to lose sight of the real object of marriage even in the heat of carnal passions for even the seat of these passions is the source of the procreation of children and the continuation of a good race on the earth. Finally, the clause, *and bear glad tidings to those who obey*, contains a mighty *بشارة* (good news) for those who may obey this injunction, for it would not only make their own lives supremely happy but would also secure for them the best progeny for all time.

### 231. Important Words:

*عرضة* (target) is derived from *عرض*. They say *عرض الشيء* meaning, he exhibited or offered the thing; he placed it before or in sight of the people. *عرض لي عارض* means, a hindrance came across my way. Thus *عرضة* means: (1) an obstacle or hindrance in the way of a person; (2) a thing or person exposed to or confronting

someone or something; (3) a butt or target like the butt of archers; also figuratively, as one might say, "he became the *عرضة* or butt of their rebukes"; (4) an object; (5) an excuse or pretext (Aqrab & Tāj).

*يمين* (oaths) is the plural of *يمين* which is derived from *يمين*. They say *يمين الرجل* meaning, he approached him from the right hand side. *يمين الله فلانا* means, God made him blessed. *يمين* means, (1) the right hand side; (2) the right hand; (3) strength, blessing and good fortune; (4) an oath (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

As there are men to be found who are likely to forget that a wife being a sacred tilth is to be treated well not only for her own sake but also for the sake of children, and such men flare up at slight causes and then resort to swearing that they would not treat their wives well nor act kindly towards their relations, the Quran here makes a suitable reference to such men and prohibits them from using the name of God for acts of injustice and transgression. The verse under comment and the one that follows serve as a sort of introduction to verse 2:227 in which the subject of swearing to keep away from one's wife has been more pointedly stated. God's name, being the holiest of all

226. <sup>a</sup> Allah will not call you to account for such of your oaths as are vain, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing.<sup>232</sup>

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ  
وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ  
قُلُوبُكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:90.

holy things, should not be used as an obstacle in the way of righteousness and of doing good to others.

The word عُرْضَةٌ meaning a butt or an obstacle, has been very appropriately used in the verse to point out that such men as swear by God to abstain from acts of righteousness hopelessly fail to appreciate the true dignity of the Supreme Being. It is indeed an act of blasphemy that one should use the name of Allah, Who is the fountain-head of all goodness, to keep away from the path of goodness. Again, it is a gross violation of the sanctity of Allah's name that it should be used as a butt or target for profane or purposeless oaths.

### 232. Important Words:

يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ (will call you to account) is derived from أَخَذَ. أَخَذَهُ means, he took hold of him; he seized him. أَخَذَهُ means, he called him to account; he punished or chastised him (Aqrah).

اللَّغْوِ (vain) is derived from لَغَا. They say لَغَا بِكَلِمَةٍ i.e. he uttered or spoke a word. لَغَا بِالشَّيْءِ means, the thing went in vain. لَغَا عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ means he deviated from the path. لَغَا قَوْلَهُ means, he spoke without proper care and thinking. اللغو therefore means, a speech or writing, etc. which is worthless and of no account and deserves no attention; it also means, the barking of a dog

(Aqrah). لَغَا means, he jested or joked with him (Lane). اللغو also means that which one utters without seriously meaning it (Muḥīṭ).

حَلِيم (Forbearing) is derived from حَلَمَ meaning, he was forbearing and clement; he forgave and connived at offences; he controlled his temper in moments of anger; he was patient, sedate, or intelligent and calm and was not hasty in punishing or taking revenge. Thus حَلِيم which is one of the attributive names of God, means, one who is forbearing and to whom the disobedience of the disobedient does not cause agitation or excitement, who is slow in punishing but quick in forgiving; it also means one who is intelligent (Aqrah, Lane & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

Oaths are very serious things, as mentioned in the preceding verse, but some men are in the habit of swearing without meaning anything. Such oaths as are referred to in this verse are oaths taken carelessly or as a matter of habit or those taken in a sudden fit of anger. The fact that such oaths are not liable to be punished does not, however, mean that indulgence in them is permitted. It only means that a person who swears vain oaths will not be punished on the basis of such oaths, i.e. these oaths



227. For those who vow *abstinence* from their wives, the *maximum* period of waiting is four months; then if they go back from the vow, surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful. **233**

لِّلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ  
أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ  
غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٣﴾

will not be legally treated as oaths. But he will certainly suffer the consequences of indulging in vain and useless talk. A Muslim is expected to avoid all things that are vain or purposeless and the Quran clearly enjoins it (23:4).

The clause, *He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned*, means that a person will have to answer for oaths he takes consciously and deliberately. The words, *what your hearts have earned*, also hint that God does not call a man to account for such passing thoughts as may flash across the mind and then disappear. Only such thoughts are punishable as are "earned" by the heart, i.e. cherished and retained by the mind.

The words, *Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing*, signify that as Allah knows your weaknesses, He treats you with forbearance, and does not call you to account for such of your acts as you might do without meaning them.

### 233. Important Words:

يُؤْلُونَ (vow) is derived from the root لَآ meaning, he fell short; or he fell short of doing what he ought to have done; or he was remiss. آلَى means, he swore. آلَيْتُ عَلَى الشَّيْءِ means, I swore to do the thing. آلَيْتُ لَا أَفْعَلُ كَذَا means, I swore that I would not do such a

thing. آلَى مِنْ زَوْجِهِ شَهْرًا means, he swore he would not go near his wife (i.e. not go in unto her) for a month. ائْتَلَى also gives the same meaning as آلَى i.e. he swore, as in 24:23. اِيْلَاءٌ means, an oath or the act of swearing; and technically it means, a vow taken by a husband not to go near his wife (Aqrab & Lane).

تَرَبُّصٌ (waiting) is derived from رَبَّصَ. They say رَبَّصَ بِهِ i.e. he waited for a good or an evil to befall him. تَرَبَّصَ means, he waited or he awaited, or he tarried waiting. تَرَبَّصَ عَنِ الْأَمْرِ means, he remained waiting and did not do the thing, i.e. he abstained from doing it (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

After the two introductory and intervening verses in which the subject of taking oaths has been dealt with, the Quran now reverts to the original subject of conjugal relations. The verse under comment speaks of those men who vow abstinence from their wives without actually divorcing them. It is, in this connection, interesting to note that while approaching the subject of divorce, dealt with in the succeeding verses, the Quran first speaks of menstruation (2:223) which is a sort of temporary and partial, though unreal, separation. Then (as in the present verse) it speaks of real though indefinite separation. And then, as in

228. And if they decide upon<sup>a</sup> divorce, then surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.<sup>234</sup>

229. And<sup>b</sup> the divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three courses;

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٨﴾

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ ۖ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا

<sup>a</sup>2:230; 33:50; 65:2, 3. <sup>b</sup>2:235; 65:5.

the succeeding verses, it speaks of real though revocable divorce. And finally (2:231) it speaks of irrevocable divorce. A really wonderful order designed to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of divorce which Islam recognizes and retains as a sort of necessary evil.

As clearly stated in the verse under comment, Islam allows four months at the most to a person who swears not to approach his wife. During this period, he must either get reconciled to his wife and restore conjugal relations, or separation will be effected between the two. Islam would in no case permit indefinite separation without divorce, leaving the woman "suspended" as it were.

The words *if they go back from the vow, surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful* indicate that swearing abstinence from one's wife is reprehensible in the sight of God Who loves to see reconciliation between husband and wife. The verse thus abolishes the custom of ايلاء which was prevalent among the Arabs before the advent of Islam and by which it was sought to deprive women of their conjugal rights for long and indefinite periods.

### 234. Important Words:

طلق (divorce) is derived from طلق

They say طَلَقَتِ الْبَائِقَةَ i.e. the she-camel became loosened and free from the rope which tied her. طَلَقَتِ الْمَرْأَةَ مِنْ زَوْجِهَا means, the woman left her husband and severed her connection with him. طَلَّقَ الْمَرْأَةَ زَوْجَهَا means, the husband divorced his wife. الطلاق therefore, means, breaking of the tie of marriage; divorce (Aqrab).

عزموا (they decide). عزم means, he made up his mind; he decided; he was determined to do a thing (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

If, after vowing abstinence from his wife, as stated in the preceding verse, the husband decides on divorce, he is free to take that course. But the words, *Allah is All-Hearing All-Knowing*, warn him that if he is thereby acting unjustly to his wife, he should not think that he can so act with impunity, for Allah is there to hear the supplications of the wife; and even if she does not or cannot pray to God, Allah knows everything.

With this verse begins a discussion of the Islamic law of divorce. According to this law, the husband possesses the right to divorce his wife, when legitimate necessity arises. But this right is to be exercised only on rare occasions and in exceptional circumstances.

and it is not lawful for them that they conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day; and their husbands have the greater right to take them back during that period, provided they desire reconciliation. And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but <sup>a</sup>men have a rank above them. And Allah is Mighty and Wise.<sup>235</sup>

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِمْ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَنَّ  
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبِعَوْنِهِمْ أَحَقُّ  
بِرَدِّهِمْ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا  
وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ  
وَاللرِّجَالُ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ<sup>ط</sup> وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ  
حَكِيمٌ<sup>ع</sup>

<sup>a</sup>4:35.

### 235. Important Words:

قُرُوء (courses) is the plural of قُرْء which is derived from قَرَأَ. They say قَرَأَ الشَّيْءَ i.e. he collected or put together the thing. قرأت الناقة means, the she-camel became pregnant. قرأت الحامل means, the pregnant woman gave birth to a child. اقرأت المرأة or قرأت المرأة means, the woman became pure from menstrual discharge. اقرأت المرأة also means, she menstruated, thus giving contrary meanings. قُرْء (Qur'un or Qar'un), means: (1) a time, and this is the primary significance of the word, as we say هبت الريح لقرئها i.e. the wind blew at its fixed time; (2) menstruation; (3) period or state of purity preceding and following a menstrual discharge, i.e. the period between two menstruations; thus the word gives contrary meanings; (4) termination of a menstruation (Aqrab & Lane). The word قُرْء is also sometimes applied to the period of

menstruation and that of purity taken together, i.e. the whole month (Muḥīṭ). According to Rāghib قُرْء means the time or state when a woman leaves her state of purity and enters that of menstruation (Mufradāt).

ارحام (wombs) is the plural of رحم (riḥm or raḥim) which is from the verb رَحِمَ. They say رَحِمَهُ i.e. he showed him mercy, he was tender towards him. رَحِمَتِ المرأة means, the woman had complaint of the womb after childbirth. رحم (raḥim) or رِحم (riḥm) means, (1) womb; (2) relationship, particularly by the female side. The expression ذوالالارحام or اولوالارحام means, relatives or kinsmen. In Muslim jurisprudence the expression signifies such relations as are not direct heirs (Lane).

بعولة (husbands), like بَعُول, is the plural of بَعَلَ. They say بَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ i.e. the man became a husband. بَعَلَتِ المرأة

means, the woman married and had a husband. بعل is like زوج meaning, both a husband and a wife, i.e. a partner in life; but the significance of husband is more common. The word also means, lord, master or owner of a thing; or a person in authority. The Arabs sometimes gave the name بعل to their idols also (Lane & Mufradāt).

المعروف (equity) is a common Arabic word which has been freely used in the Quran as well as the Ḥadīth. The word is derived from عرث. They say عرفه i.e. he knew it either by means of the five senses or by mental perception, as by reflection, or by consideration of the effect of a thing on the mind; he recognized it. المعروف means, (1) a known or commonly known thing; (2) an action or thing the goodness of which is known by reason, i.e. equity; (3) an action or thing the goodness of which is known by the law of Sharī'ah; (4) goodness, kindness and beneficence; (5) liberality coupled with moderation; (6) good fellowship with one's family and others; (7) sincere and honest word of advice, etc. (Lane). It may be noted here that while taking the oath of allegiance from would-be Muslims, the Holy Prophet always used the word المعروف asking them to solemnly affirm that they would obey him in all معروف things, i.e. not only in such things as formed part of the divine law of Sharī'ah but also in those which the Prophet held to be good by his own reason.

درجة (rank) means, (1) the various steps forming a set of stairs; (2) rank; (3) eminence (4) degree (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

In view of the fact that divorce is

the most hateful of all lawful things in the sight of God (Dāwūd), it has been hedged round by many checks and limitations. One of these checks is that a husband can divorce his wife only when she is clean i.e. in a state of purity, and he has had no sexual knowledge of her in her period of purity. After the pronouncement of divorce the wife must wait for three menstruations, i.e. about three months, which period is called عدة ('iddah) or the period of waiting. This is another check, because this period of waiting gives to the husband sufficient time to consider the pros and cons of his action and to allow his love for her, if there is yet a dormant spark lying smouldering somewhere, to reassert itself. The third check laid down in this verse is that a divorced woman, if pregnant, must not conceal this fact from her husband, for the expected birth of a child is calculated to go a long way in bringing about reconciliation between the couple. The fourth check, as mentioned in the succeeding verses, is that for complete and irrevocable separation there should be three divorces. After the pronouncement of the first as well as the second divorce, and before the expiry of the period of waiting, the husband enjoys the privilege of taking his wife back, if he so desires. Even after the period of waiting is over, the couple can become reunited in the case of the first and second divorce by renewing the marriage tie.

The verse adds that as far as personal rights are concerned, the husband and the wife stand on a par, but in matters relating to discipline,

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230. Such <sup>a</sup>divorce may be pronounced twice; then, <sup>b</sup>either retain them in a becoming manner or send them away with kindness. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you have given them (your wives) unless both fear that they cannot observe the limits prescribed by Allah. But,

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَيْنِ ۖ فَاِمْسَاكٌۢ بِمَعْرُوفٍ اَوْ  
تَسْرِيحٌۢ بِاِحْسَانٍ ۚ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمَا اَنْ  
تَاْخُذُوْا مِمَّا اَتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ شَيْئًا اِلَّا اَنْ  
يَخَافَا اِلَّا يَقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنْ  
خِفْتُمَا اِلَّا يَقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ ۙ فَلَا جُنَاحَ  
عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهٖ ۚ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:228. <sup>b</sup>2:232; 4:130; 65:3.

the husband has superiority over the wife, i.e. in case of difference, the final authority is vested in him. The reasons for this are given in 4:35.

The divine attribute *Mighty* added at the end of the verse contains a reminder and a warning to the husband that he must not misuse the authority he has been given in household affairs, for there is the Almighty God over his head to Whom he is responsible for his actions. The attribute also provides a reason for vesting authority in the husband, who is the stronger of the parties. The attribute *Wise* brings home to the husband the fact that the vesting of the final authority in him is based on just and wise considerations, because wherever two or more persons live together, it is necessary that the wisest among them be appointed the *Amīr* or the chief for the efficient running of their affairs and the uniformity of their actions.

A word here about the significance of قَرء seems essential. As explained under Important Words, this word

gives two distinct and contrary meanings, i.e. (1) menstruation; and (2) the period of purity between two menstruations. This has given rise to much difference of opinion among scholars of Muslim jurisprudence; Abū Bakr and ‘Umar among the Companions of the Holy Prophet and Abū Ḥanīfah and Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal the Imāms of jurisprudence have held the view that by using the word قَرء the Quran means menstruation and not the period of purity. On the contrary, ‘Ā’ishah (wife of the Holy Prophet) and Ibn ‘Umar among the Companions, and Mālik and Shāfi‘ī among the Imāms of jurisprudence have held the opposite view (Muḥīṭ). Opinions being so balanced, it would be open to a Muslim to take either of the two views, but a collective survey of relevant arguments, which need not be stated here, leads one to the conclusion that the first-mentioned view is perhaps the more reasonable of the two. If, however, one should desire to be on the perfectly safe side, it is open to him to take the word قَرء

if you fear that they cannot observe the limits prescribed by Allah, then it shall be no sin for either of them in what she gives to get her freedom. These are the limits prescribed by Allah, so transgress them not; and whoso transgresses the limits prescribed by Allah, it is they that are the wrongdoers.<sup>236</sup>

فَلَا تَعْتَدُوها وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ  
فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣٦﴾

to signify the periods of menstruation and purity taken together, i.e. the whole month.

### 236. Important Words:

امسك (retain) is derived from امسك which is again derived from امسك. They say امسك به i.e. he stuck to it. امسك is both transitive and intransitive. امسكه means, he got hold of it and stopped and retained it. امسك عن الكلام means, he abstained from talking. امساك means, (1) to hold or stop or prevent or retain; (2) to refrain or abstain (Aqrab).

تسريح (send away) is the noun-infinitive from سرح (sarraḥa) which is derived from سرح. They say سرح المواشي i.e. the cattle went forth for grazing. سرح السيل means, the flood moved on leisurely. سرحه means, he sent him away. سرح فلان زوجته means, he sent away or divorced his wife (Aqrab).

حدود (limits) is the plural of حد i.e. a limit. حده means, he put a limit to it. حد الشيء عن الشيء means, he distinguished one thing from the other. الحد means, (1) the limit or the line where two things meet; (2) last limit or extremity of a thing; (3) that by which a thing may be defined; (4)

prescribed punishment for an offence. حدود الله means God's religious commandments (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse contains the fifth check on divorce. A man who seeks permanent and irrevocable separation from his wife must pronounce divorce on three separate occasions, each in a separate طهر i.e. period of purity, when the woman is clean and the man has not gone in unto her during that period of purity. The pronouncement of divorce twice or thrice at one and the same time is not permissible as the verse hints in the word مرتان (twice) which signifies a thing happening on two separate occasions and not two things happening at one and the same time. The Holy Prophet treated such collective pronouncements, whatever their number, as only one divorce (Tirmidhī & Dāwūd). According to Nasā'ī, the Holy Prophet was extremely angry when one day he was told that a person had made all the three pronouncements of divorce at one and the same time, and said: "Is the Book of God going to be made

a plaything while I am yet among you?"

After the pronouncement of the first two divorces, the husband can take back the divorced wife within *'iddah*, i.e. the period of waiting, with or without her consent; but after the period of waiting is over, he can take her back only with her consent and that after remarrying her. After the pronouncement of the third divorce, however, the husband forfeits this right and the couple are finally separated. A Companion of the Holy Prophet once asked him saying, "The Quran has here spoken of two divorces only, whence comes in the third!" The Prophet referred him to the Quranic words *اوتسريح باحسان* i.e. *or send them away with kindness* meaning thereby that after the pronouncement of the first two divorces the husband was free to retain his wife if he so desired but if he wanted irrevocable separation, he should "send her away", i.e. divorce her a third time (Jarīr & Musnad). The point is further made clear in the succeeding verse. Thus the word *تسريح* here signifies *طلاق* i.e. divorce.

The present verse also makes it clear that when a person divorces his wife, he forfeits *مهر* i.e. the dower-money he has given her; and if at the time of divorce he has not yet given her the dower-money agreed on by the parties, he must make the payment before the divorce becomes effective. Again, he is not allowed to take back anything he might have given her in the form of gifts and presents as the clause *it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you have given them* indicates.

If, however, it is the wife who

demands separation, technically known as *خلع* (*Khul'a* lit. the putting off of clothes etc., or the shedding of old leaves), she must get it through a *Qāḍī* or judge as the word *خفتم* (you fear), which has been put in the plural number, hints. In this case she has to part with, in full or in part, her dowry as well as the gifts she might have received from her husband, as agreed on by the parties or decided by the judge. The case of Jamīlah, wife of Qais bin Thābit, provides a good illustration of the exercise of the right of *Khul'a* by women. She demanded separation from her husband, Qais, on the ground that she did not like him, i.e. their temperaments being different, she could not get on with him. She was granted *Kkul'a* by the Holy Prophet, but she had to return to her husband the orchard he had given her (Bukhārī). This right, however, is not to be exercised in a light-hearted manner. The Holy Prophet has condemned the action of a woman who demands separation from her husband without valid reason even as he has condemned the action of a man who divorces his wife without genuine cause. He is reported to have said, "A woman who seeks separation from her husband without a legitimate cause shall be deprived of the fragrance of heaven" (Dāwūd & Tirmidhī). This is what is hinted in the concluding words, *these are the limits prescribed by Allah, so transgress them not, etc.* The husband and the wife are both warned to fear God and refrain from transgressing the limits imposed by God for their own good.

231. And if he divorces her *the third time*, then she is not lawful for him thereafter, until she marries another husband; and, if he *also* divorces her, then it shall be no sin for them to return to each other, provided they are sure that they would be able to observe the limits prescribed by Allah. And these are the limits prescribed by Allah which He makes clear to the people who have knowledge.<sup>237</sup>

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّى  
تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ ۖ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا  
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ  
يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ  
يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٧﴾

### 237. Important Words:

يَتَرَاجَعَا (return to each other) is derived from رَجَعَ i.e. he returned; the word is used to indicate the coming together of people after their dispersal or separation, as they say تَرَجَعَ الْقَوْمُ i.e. the people returned to the place from where they separated or left (Aqrab).

يُقِيمَا (observe) is derived from أَقَامَ which means, he made a thing stand upright; he observed or duly performed a religious commandment or duty, etc. (Lane). See also under 2:4.

تَنْكِحَ (she marries) is derived from نَكَحَ. They say نَكَحَ or نَكَحَتْ meaning (1) he or she married a spouse; (2) he or she had sexual intercourse with his or her spouse. In the present verse the word is used in the latter sense. See also 2:222.

### Commentary:

This verse refers to the third and final pronouncement of divorce after which the husband loses all right of reunion with his wife unless the

divorced woman marries another man and establishes conjugal relations with him, and is then formally divorced by him or he dies, leaving her free to marry another man. By the inclusion of this provision in the law of divorce, Islam has, on the one hand, enhanced the sanctity of the marriage tie which must not be trifled with and has declared unlawful the evil practice of *ḥalālah* (حَلَالَة); and, on the other, it has afforded yet another opportunity to the couple who once had lived as husband and wife to become reunited if they so desired. The practice of *ḥalālah* referred to above consists in a divorced woman marrying a man, other than her former husband, with the object of obtaining divorce from him and thereby making herself lawful for the former husband. Islam condemns this practice as a thing accursed (Tirmidhī ch. on *Nikāḥ*) and enjoins that marriage with and divorce from another husband must both be genuine.



232. And when you divorce your wives and <sup>a</sup>they approach the end of their *appointed* period, then <sup>b</sup>either retain them in a becoming manner; or send them away in a becoming manner; but retain them not wrongfully so that you may transgress. And whoso does that, surely wrongs his own soul. And do not make a jest of the commandments of Allah, and <sup>c</sup>remember the favour of Allah upon you and the Book and the Wisdom which He has sent down to you, whereby He exhorts you. And fear Allah and know that Allah knows all things well.<sup>238</sup>

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ  
فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ  
بِمَعْرُوفٍ ۖ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضَرَارًا  
لِّتَعْتَدُوا ۚ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ  
نَفْسَهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا  
وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ  
بِهِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ  
شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٨﴾

٢٣٨

<sup>a</sup>2:229; 65:5. <sup>b</sup>See 2:230. <sup>c</sup>3:104.

### 238. Important Words:

بلغ (they approach) is from بلغ which means, he reached or came to or attained; or he was near to reaching or attaining (Lane).

اجل (period) is the noun-infinitive from the verb اجل meaning, he or it delayed or fell short. اجل الشيء means, he appointed a time or period for the thing. اجل therefore means, the term or period appointed or specified for a thing; also the end of such period. Death is called اجل because for every life there is an appointed time when it must come to an end (Aqrab Lane).

يعظكم (exhorts you). يعظ is derived from وعظ meaning, he gave him good

advice; he exhorted him; he admonished him; he warned him of the consequences of his actions and called him to a life of righteousness (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The verse contains a general injunction about the treatment of divorced women.

As is apparent from the context, the divorce spoken of here refers to the revocable divorce. After such divorce has been pronounced, there are only two courses open to the husband. He may either retain his wife and treat her with kindness or he may part with her in a good and becoming manner.

**R. 30.**

233. And when you divorce women and they reach the end of their period, prevent them not from marrying their husbands, if they agree between themselves in a decent manner. This is an admonition for him among you who believes in Allah and the Last Day. It is more blessed for you and purer; and Allah knows but you do not know.<sup>239</sup>

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٩﴾

He is not allowed to maltreat her and keep her in a state of suspense. The concluding part of the verse warns the husband against making light of the commandments of Allah relating to the rights of women, adding that, God being All-Knowing, even the hidden intentions and secret machinations of man are known to Him.

**239. Important Words:**

لا تعضلوهن (prevent them not) is derived from عضل. They say عضلها i.e. he prevented or debarred her from marrying. The primary signification of عضل is the act of straitening or preventing, or withholding or debarring. عضل means, he straitened him in his affairs and intervened as an obstacle between him and that which he desired (Tāj).

تراضوا (agree between themselves) is derived from رضى i.e. he was pleased, or he was satisfied, or he agreed. تراضى القوم means, the people agreed between themselves, or they came to a mutual agreement (Aqrab).

ازى (more blessed) is derived from زك which means, it increased or augmented; it received blessing from God; it was or became pure. اذى means, more blessed, containing greater benefits, conducive to more good (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The word "husbands" mentioned in this verse may refer either to former husbands or to prospective ones. In the former case, the clause, *and when you divorce women*, would be taken as referring to the first or second pronouncement of divorce. Sometimes, when a husband desires to take back his wife before pronouncing the third or irrevocable divorce, her offended relatives do not like her to go back to him again and therefore try to prevent her from remarrying him. The verse condemns that practice. In case the word "husbands" stands for prospective husbands, the above phrase would

234. And <sup>a</sup>mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years; *this is* for <sup>b</sup>those who desire to complete the suckling. And the man to whom the child belongs shall be responsible for their (the mothers') food and clothing according to usage. <sup>c</sup>No soul is burdened beyond its capacity. The mother shall not make *the father* suffer on account of her child, nor shall he to whom the child belongs make *the mother* suffer on account of his child, and the same is incumbent on the heir. If they both decide upon weaning *the child* by mutual consent and consultation, there is no blame on them. And if you desire to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there shall be no blame

وَالْوَالِدَتُ يُرْضَعْنَ أَوْلَا دَهْنٍ حَوْلَيْنِ  
كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ<sup>ط</sup>  
وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ  
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ<sup>ط</sup> لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا  
وُسْعَهَا<sup>ه</sup> لَا تَضَارُّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا  
مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ<sup>و</sup> وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ  
ذَلِكَ<sup>ع</sup> فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا  
وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا<sup>ط</sup> وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ  
أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُمْ  
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ<sup>ط</sup> وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ  
اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ<sup>٢٣٤</sup>

<sup>a</sup>31:15; 46:16. <sup>b</sup>65:7. <sup>c</sup>2:287; 6:153; 7:43; 23:63; 65:8.

refer to the third or final divorce. Some men, even after the complete dissolution of their marriage, do not like the idea that their divorced wives should marry other persons and try to prevent them from contracting new marriages. This practice is also condemned in the clause, *prevent them not from marrying their (prospective) husbands*. Should the guardian of a divorced woman prevent her from remarrying her

former husband or should the former husband prevent her from marrying a new husband, she can do so with the permission of the *Qāḍī* or the judge. The verse under comment also implies a repudiation of the evil practice of pronouncing three divorces at one and the same time, because had it been permissible, the question of divorced women remarrying their former husbands would have been meaningless.

on you, provided you pay what you have agreed to pay, in a fair manner. And fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do.<sup>240</sup>

### 240. Important Words:

يرضع (give suck) is derived from ارضع i.e. he (the babe) sucked. ارضعت means, she (the mother or the wet-nurse) gave suck to the child. استرضع means, he arranged for the suckling of the child; he engaged a wet-nurse for it. The infinitive-noun رضاعة signifies sucking. هذا اخي من الرضاعة means, he is my foster-brother, both having sucked from the breast of the same woman (Aqrab & Lane).

حول (two years) is the dual of حول (a year) which is the infinitive-noun from حال meaning, it passed and became complete, or it passed from one state to another, or it turned round. A year is called حول because it is a complete measure of time and turns round and round. حول also means strength and power to do a thing as in the well-known formula لاحول ولا قوة الا بالله (Aqrab).

وسعها (its capacity) is derived from وسع meaning, it was sufficiently capacious. وسعت رحمة الله كل شيء means, God's mercy extends to, and covers, all things. وسع means capacity or power or strength. The infinitive-noun from it is سعة meaning, breadth; extent, capaciousness; capacity and power. ذوسعة means, a man of means or a man of ample means (Aqrab).

تكلف (is burdened) is derived from

كلف. They say اكلفه امرأ i.e. he imposed on him the task of doing a thing, or he tasked him to do a thing. It also means, he ordered him to do a thing which was difficult or troublesome or inconvenient (Lane).

فصال (weaning the child) is derived from فصل which is both transitive and intransitive, meaning, he separated, he divided, he partitioned; or he got separated, he went forth from. فصلت المرأة means, the woman weaned her child, which is also a sort of separation between the woman and her suckling. هذا يوم الفصل means, this is the day when a decision or a distinction shall be made between the parties, i.e. the doers of good and the doers of evil. فصال means, the weaning of a child from its mother or from the woman who suckles it (Tāj).

تشاور (consultation) is derived from شاور. They say شاور العسل i.e. he extracted honey from the honey-comb. شاور الدابة means, he rode the beast in order to try it and ascertain its worth. اشار besides giving the same meaning as شاور, also means, he made a thing known, he pointed to a thing, he gave a word of good counsel to a person. شاوره means, he consulted him, he sought his advice and counsel. تشاور means, mutual consultation. مشورة and شورى give similar meanings, i.e. consultation (Aqrab).

235. And <sup>a</sup>those of you who die and leave wives behind, <sup>b</sup>these (wives) shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days. And when they have reached the end of their period, no sin shall lie on you in anything that they do with regard to themselves according to what is fair. And Allah is aware of what you do.<sup>241</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ  
أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ  
أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا  
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ  
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:241. <sup>b</sup>2:229.

### Commentary:

If a woman is divorced while she is pregnant, the question of the suckling of the child and the expense of bringing it up naturally arises. The verse under comment supplies the answer. It points out that the suckling of the child should last for two years at the maximum. But it is allowable to discontinue it before the end of that period, if the father and the mother both agree on that course. The verse also implies that the child is not to be weaned before the end of two years without the consent of its mother.

The expression *لا تضار* is both in the active and the passive voice; the clause *لا تضار والدته بولدها* may therefore mean that: (1) the mother shall not make the father suffer on account of her child; and (2) the mother shall not be made to suffer on account of her child; and both meanings are equally good and equitable. The words *مولوده* (he to whom the child belongs) have been used here in preference to the

simpler word *والد* (father), in order to point to the inherent right of the father to possess the child and to his natural responsibility for its maintenance.

The clause, *and the same is incumbent on the heir*, lays down an important social principle. If a father dies leaving behind a child, it is the duty of his heirs to bring up the child and maintain it until it reaches puberty. This shall not be considered an act of favour on their part, but an act of duty. One who inherits the property of a deceased person is duty bound to bring up the children the latter may leave behind. He who receives a support from another must be prepared to give the same to him, when he may stand in need of it.

### 241. Important Words:

*يتوفون* (who die) is derived from *توفي* which is derived from *وفي* (*wafā*). They say *وفي بالعهد* i.e. he fulfilled his promise; *وفي فلانا حقه* (*waffā*) means, he gave him his right

236. And there shall be no blame on you in throwing out a hint regarding a proposal of marriage to *these* women or in keeping *the desire* hidden in your minds. Allah knows that you will think of them *in this connection*. But make not a contract with them in secret, except that you say a fair word. And resolve not on the marriage tie until the prescribed period

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ  
خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ<sup>ط</sup>  
عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنْ لَا  
تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا  
مَعْرُوفًا<sup>ه</sup> وَلَا تَعْزِمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ  
حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ<sup>ط</sup> وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ  
اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ<sup>ج</sup>

in full. اوفى gives both the meanings ascribed to وفى and وفى (waffā) above. توفى means, he took something in full, as they say توفى حقه i.e. he got or obtained his right in full. توفى الله زيدا means, God took away the soul of Zaid, leaving the body behind; God caused Zaid to die. توفى فلان means, his soul was taken away, i.e. he died. In this case God is متوفى (mutawaffī) and the man who dies is متوفى (mutawaffī). الوفاة means, death (Aqrab). The Quran says: الله يتوفى الانفس حين موتها والتي لم تمت في منامها i.e. *God takes away the souls of men at the time of their death; and He also takes away the souls of men that have not died, during their sleep* (39:43). The Arabic idiom, which has the support of the Quranic usage, definitely shows that wherever God is فاعل (i.e. subject) and a being having a soul is مفعول به (i.e. object) the word توفى invariably means, the taking away of the soul.

### Commentary:

After having dealt with the question

of the remarriage of divorced women, the Quran in this verse proceeds to issue commandments regarding widows. The عدة i.e. the period of waiting in the case of widows, is four months and ten days which roughly corresponds to four alternate periods of menstruation and purity combined. Islam has prescribed a longer period in the case of a widow as a mark of respect for her feelings at the death of her husband and has thus added to the dignity and sanctity of the marriage tie.

This verse also implies a rebuke to those who are opposed to widow remarriage, thinking it to be an insult to the family and a disgrace to the widowed woman. The words, *what is fair*, show that it is not only lawful, but preferable and desirable, for a widow to remarry. The words, *in anything that they do with regard to themselves*, obviously refer to remarriage. Elsewhere the Quran says, *And marry your widows* (24:33).

reaches its end. And know that Allah knows what is in your minds; so beware of it. And know that Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing.<sup>242</sup>

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُوٌّ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

### 242. Important Words:

**عرضتم** (you throw out a hint) is derived from **عرض** meaning, he offered and presented a thing. **عرض** ('*arraḍa*) means, he used an expression susceptible of different meanings; or he mentioned a thing not clearly but in a veiled manner; or he used words to convey a sense which the words used did not definitely convey (Lane).

**خطبة** (proposal of marriage) is derived from **خطب** meaning, he addressed a meeting; he delivered a sermon. **خطب المرأة** means, he proposed marriage to her. **خطبة** (*khutbah*) means, a sermon. **خطبة** (*khiṭbah*) means, a proposal of marriage (Aqrab).

**اكنتم** (you keep hidden) is derived from **كن**. They say **كن الشيء** or **اكن الشيء** meaning, he concealed the thing; he covered it. **كان** means, a veil or covering, and **مكون** means, covered or hidden (Aqrab).

**عقدة** (tie) is the infinitive-noun from **عقد** meaning, he tied; he made a thing firm and fast. **عقد الحبل** means, he tied the rope; he tied it in knots. **عقدة** means, a tie; a contract that ties up or binds two parties; a marriage contract (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

According to this verse, it is forbidden to a man to make an open proposal of marriage to a widow

within her **عدة** or the prescribed period of waiting. He who intends to marry a widow must keep his intention concealed from her. He may drop a hint indirectly suggestive of his intention. But he must on no account make an open suggestion or a formal proposal or even a secret proposal concerning marriage. A widow, too, is prohibited from giving her consent to such a proposal within the prescribed period. She must patiently wait for four months and ten days out of deference to the memory of her departed spouse and in order that her possible pregnancy may become apparent, because a pregnant woman is not allowed to marry until she is delivered of the child.

The words, *beware of it*, are meant to caution men to be on their guard against disobeying these commandments which are meant for their own good. If God had not laid them down, all social order would have gone to pieces.

The divine attributes, "Forgiving" and "Forbearing", have been mentioned at the end of this verse not to hint that breach of these injunctions would find God Forgiving and Forbearing but that the exigencies of the circumstances required stricter laws in this matter, but as God knows human

**R. 31.**

237. It shall be no sin for you if you divorce women while you have not touched them, nor settled for them a dowry. But provide for them—the rich man according to his means and the poor man according to his means—a provision in a becoming manner, an obligation upon the virtuous.<sup>243</sup>

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا  
لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً  
وَمِمَّا يَعْوِهُنَّ عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ قَدَرُهُ وَعَلَى  
الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهُ مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا  
عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

weaknesses, He has been lenient in this respect. So whatever commandment has now been given, must be faithfully followed and all lapse be honestly guarded against.

**243. Important Words:**

متعوهن (provide for them) is derived from متع (mata'a). They say متع الشيء i.e. the thing became tall. متع الرجل means, the man became well off. متع الله فلانا (matta'a) means, God granted him life and the necessities thereof. متع المرأة المطلقة means, he provided his divorced wife with necessities of life. تمتع به أو منه or استمتع means, he profited by it for some length of time; he was afforded an opportunity to enjoy it. المتاع means, things that are necessary for life without affording opulence; things useful and necessary such as food, clothing, household utensils, furniture, etc. (Aqrab & Lane).

المقتِر (the poor man) is derived from قتر. They say قتر على عياله i.e. he was niggardly towards his family. اقتر الرجل means, the man became poor and straitened in circumstances. المقتِر is,

therefore, one who is poor, one who is in straitened circumstances (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

Circumstances might arise when a husband may consider it necessary or desirable to divorce his wife before they have had conjugal relations, i.e. before the man has gone in unto his wife and even before any مهر (dowry) has been decided upon by the parties. The verse allows this procedure but makes it obligatory on the husband to see that in such a case his divorced wife receives suitable provision according to his means. Thus Islam seeks not only to provide for the divorced woman but to leave no trace of bitterness, which is very often the result of the dissolution of a marriage. The word المحسنين i.e. the virtuous or those who act benevolently, has been used to exhort the husband that the more generous he is in his treatment of his divorced wife, the more pleasing will his conduct be in the sight of God.



238. And if you divorce them before you have touched them, but have settled for them a dowry, then half of what you have settled *shall be due from you*, unless they remit, or he, in whose hand is the tie of marriage, should remit. And that you should remit is nearer to righteousness. And do not forget to do good to one another. Surely, Allah sees what you do.<sup>244</sup>

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ  
وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً قِصْفًا مَا  
فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا الَّذِي  
بِيَدِهِ عَقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ۖ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ  
لِلتَّقْوَى ۖ وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۗ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٨﴾

#### 244. Important Words:

يعفو (should remit) is derived from عفا meaning: (1) he gave more than what was due; or (2) he relinquished his right or remitted it in whole or in part (Tāj). See also 2:220.

#### Commentary:

If the divorce occurs after the dowry has been fixed but before the husband has gone in unto his wife, the husband shall pay half of the fixed dowry. The clause, *he in whose hand is the tie of marriage*, may signify either the husband or the guardian of the divorced woman, because whereas after marriage the tie of marriage is in the hands of the husband, before marriage the guardian of the woman also holds it in his hands. In the former case, the word يعفو would mean that the husband should try to give more than half the dowry, or if he has already paid the whole dowry, he should try

not to demand its return. If, however, the clause, *he in whose hand is the tie of marriage*, be considered to apply to the guardian of the divorced woman, the word يعفو would mean that he should try to remit or relinquish her right, i.e. he should, so far as possible, strive to give up, even that which he is entitled to receive on behalf of the divorced woman. But God certainly prefers that the husband should make a greater show of generosity.

This is how each party is exhorted to vie with the other in acting generously toward the other, the husband by paying more than what is obligatory on him, and the wife or her guardian by relinquishing what is due to her. If people truly inculcated such a spirit of sacrifice, the earth would indeed become a heaven.

The expression, *And that you should remit is nearer to righteousness*, applies to the husband

239. "Watch over Prayers, and the middle Prayer, and stand before Allah submissively.<sup>245</sup>

حِفْظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ  
الْوُسْطَىٰ ۖ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴿٢٣٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>23:10; 70:35.

particularly; but it may, in its broader significance, apply to all—husbands, wives and guardians.

### 245. Important Words:

حفظ (watch) is derived from حفظ. They say حفظه i.e. he preserved it, or he guarded or protected it, or he prevented it from perishing or becoming lost. حفظ القرآن means, he memorized the Quran, i.e. he learned it by heart. حافظ على الامر means, he watched over the thing; he attended to it carefully and constantly (Tāj).

قانتين (submissively) is derived from قنت for which see 2:117. The word conveys, among others, three important meanings: (1) standing motionless, (2) refraining from speech and (3) standing submissively (Lane). All these meanings are applicable here.

### Commentary:

This verse which stresses the importance of, and regularity in, Prayers appears to be rather oddly placed, being wedged in between verses relating to conjugal relations. But the very context of it explains the deep philosophy of its meaning. After marriage one is apt to become a little lax in Prayers, particularly the supererogatory *Tahajjud* Prayer (said in the latter part of the night). Besides, family life multiplies the cares of both man and woman. Hence, the necessity of urging

married people to be regular and punctual in their Prayers.

الصلوة الوسطى (the Middle Prayer) has been differently explained. According to some commentators it is the *Tahajjud* Prayer, and according to others, it is the morning Prayer, while according to yet others, it is the late afternoon or 'Aṣr Prayer. The latter view is supported by some of the sayings of the Holy Prophet. For it is on record that on his missing the right time of the 'Aṣr Prayer, when engaged in repelling the repeated attacks of the enemy in the Battle of the Ditch, and having been obliged to combine it with the *Maghrib* or the sunset Prayer, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "May God curse the Jews (who were mostly responsible for this battle)! They have prevented us from saying our Middle Prayer in time" (Bukhārī). Truly speaking, however, the "Middle Prayer" is the Prayer which happens to fall within busy hours. In the above-quoted tradition, the Holy Prophet called the 'Aṣr the "Middle Prayer," because it fell within extraordinarily busy hours. The Quran has placed this verse here to point out firstly, that married life, and for that matter any life however busy, should not make man slack in the observance of Prayers, and secondly, that like this verse, the Middle Prayer is one which is surrounded by

240. <sup>a</sup>If you are in a state of fear, then say your Prayer on foot or riding; <sup>b</sup>but when you are safe, remember Allah as He has taught you that which you did not know.<sup>246</sup>

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا  
أَمِنْتُمْ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ  
تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٤٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:102. <sup>b</sup>4:104.

apparently incongruous elements. The style is peculiar to the Quran but is quite natural.

The clause, *and stand before Allah submissively*, teaches that besides aiming at complete concentration in Prayers the worshipper should observe three special injunctions: (1) he should refrain from speech, (2) he should stand motionless and refrain from making any unnecessary movement, and (3) his general attitude should be that of submissiveness, as lack of these is liable to adversely affect concentration and detract from the sanctity of worship.

### 246. Important Words:

رجالا (on foot) is the plural of راجل (one who walks on foot) which is derived from رَجَلَ i.e. he walked on foot, رَجْل (rijl) meaning a foot. رَجُل (rajul) which means man is so called because man walks on foot and not on both hands and feet like quadrupeds (Lane).

ركبانا (riding) is the plural of رَكَب (one who rides) which is derived from رَكَب i.e. he rode an animal or a conveyance. One says, رَكَبْتُ الْفَرَسَ i.e. I mounted the horse. رَكَبَ الرَّجُلُ الْبَحْرَ means, the man embarked on a sea

voyage. رَكَبَ ذَنْبًا means, he made sin his riding beast, i.e. he committed a sin (Lane).

### Commentary:

The five daily Prayers constitute the most important worship in Islam. In no circumstances can a Muslim neglect his Prayers as long as he is sane and conscious. Even when a person is moving about in a state of extreme fear and consternation, he must not fail to say his Prayers and should perform them on horseback or on foot, whether running or sitting or lying, as the case may be.

In view of this great importance of Prayers, a married couple can ill afford to be careless about them. The form in which Prayers are to be performed in time of ordinary fear or danger is mentioned in 4:102, 103; but the present verse refers to a state of extreme fear when one cannot observe even the form of ordinary صلاة الخوف (Prayer in a state of fear).

The clause, *but when you are safe, remember Allah as he has taught you*, means that the injunction with regard to offering Prayers on foot or on horseback, etc. pertains to very special circumstances only. As soon as better conditions return, one

241. And <sup>a</sup>those of you who die and leave behind wives shall bequeath to their wives provision for a year without their being turned out. But if they *themselves* go out, there shall be no blame upon you in regard to any proper thing which they do concerning themselves. And Allah is *Mighty and Wise*.<sup>247</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ  
أَزْوَاجًا ۖ وَصِيَّةً لِّأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَّتَاعًا إِلَى  
الْحَوْلِ غَيْرِ إِخْرَاجٍ ۚ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا  
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ  
مِنْ مَّعْرُوفٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:235.

should pray in the ordinary way as taught in the closing portion of the preceding verse, i.e. one should stand motionless in Prayer and refrain from speech, etc.

### 247. Commentary:

The middle verses, which came in like the middle Prayer, having ended, the Quran reverts to the original subject of conjugal relations. The verse under comment is erroneously believed by some to have been abrogated by 2:235 and 4:13. Apart from the fact that the abrogation theory is based on lack of the knowledge of true teaching of the Quran, there is nothing in the verses referred to above which contradicts the provision contained in the present verse. The period of waiting laid down for a widow in 2:235 is four months and ten days in which time she can, as of right, claim residence and maintenance from the heirs of her deceased husband. The period of one year mentioned in the present verse

has nothing to do with the above-mentioned period of waiting, as the words, *but if they themselves go out, there shall be no blame upon you*; clearly show. The present verse only contains a concession or a favour for a widow in addition to her right of residence and maintenance mentioned in 2:235. One year is about the time conveniently required by a widow for making suitable arrangements about her future. It is also the requisite time for a pregnant widow to be delivered of the child and relieved of the encumbrances attending thereto. Nor has this verse anything to do with the share of a widow in the property left by her husband as stated in 4:13. The concession about residence and maintenance for one year mentioned in the present verse forms no part of her share in the inheritance. The verse contains no obligatory injunction, but only an additional exhortation to the heirs of the deceased person to show special kindness to the widow for a period of one year, just as the

242. And for the divorced women *also* there should be <sup>a</sup>a provision according to what is fair—an obligation on the God-fearing.<sup>248</sup>

243. Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to you that you may understand.<sup>249</sup>

R. 32.

244. Dost thou not know of those who went forth from their homes, and they were thousands, fearing death? And Allah said to them: <sup>b</sup>‘Die;’ then He brought them to life. Surely, Allah is Munificent to men, but most men are not grateful.<sup>250</sup>

وَلِلْمُطَلَّقاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ <sup>ط</sup>حَقًّا  
عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٤٢﴾

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٤٣﴾

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ  
وَهُمْ أَلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ  
اللَّهُ مَوْتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ <sup>ط</sup>إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو  
فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ  
لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٤٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:232; 65:3. <sup>b</sup>5:27.

following verse embodies an identical exhortation in favour of a divorced woman.

#### 248. Commentary:

Just as the preceding verse bestowed an additional favour on widows, the present one bestows an additional favour on divorced women. The injunction is particularly essential in the case of divorced women, because in moments of bitterness, which is the inevitable aftermath of a dissolved marriage, people are liable to be unjust and cruel towards their former wives. The verse warns them not to lose sight of the fear of God on such occasions and to act towards their former spouses not only with justice but with positive benevolence and kindness.

#### 249. Important Words:

تعقلون (you may understand) is derived from عقل for which see 2:45. The word also signifies the sense of binding and restraining.

#### Commentary:

The verse points out that the above commandments have been given so that people might learn to act wisely and by exercising restraint on themselves, refrain from breaking God's behests.

#### 250. Commentary:

The commandments relating to conjugal relations were mentioned as an offshoot of the subject of جهاد (holy war) dealt with in 2:217 and the following verses. The Quran now

245. And <sup>a</sup>fight in the cause of Allah and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.<sup>251</sup>

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥١﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:191; 4:85.

reverts to the original subject and by way of re-introduction cites the example of the Israelites who had left the land of the Pharaohs for fear of death. Trodden under the foot of the tyrant, the children of Israel were then in a most abject condition, and the wise God, in His eternal wisdom, decreed that they should lead a life of ordeals in the wilderness before becoming fit for the great life that awaited them in the Promised Land. The words, *Allah said to them: 'Die'*, point to the great truth that all life must be preceded by death, i.e. great trials and extraordinary sacrifices.

As mentioned above, the clause, *those who went forth from their homes*, refers to the Israelites who had gone forth from Egypt to escape persecution by Pharaoh. It was the fear of death which had made the Israelites migrate from the land (2:50).

The words, *they were thousands*, contradict the Bible which represents the number of the Israelites migrating from Egypt as six hundred thousand. Recent researches favour the Quranic view (See *History of the People of Israel*, p. 145, by Ernest Renan, London, 1888, and *History of Palestine and the Jews*, i. 174 by John Kitto, London, 1844). See also. 2:55.

The story of the exodus of the Israelites is briefly this. When, being persecuted by Pharaoh, they left Egypt and crossed over to Asia, Moses wanted them to enter the

Promised Land, but they were afraid of the people that dwelt there and refused to march ahead, saying *Go thou and thy Lord and fight and here we sit* (5:25). The result was that they drew upon themselves the wrath of God, Who said to Moses, *Verily, it shall be forbidden them for forty years; in distraction shall they wander through the land* (5:27). The promise was thus put off for forty years and the children of Israel were left to wander in the wilderness until those who had refused to fight perished in the desert, whereafter the younger generation led by Joshua conquered the land. Thus it was that the people whom God had caused to perish had new life breathed into them. It is with reference to these events that the Quran uses the word "die" in the verse under comment. This very death, i.e. destruction of the rebellious and training of the youth through trials and ordeals, proved the forerunner of life. Elsewhere, the Quran says about the Israelites: *Then We raised you up after your death* (2:57).

It may also be noted here that from this verse onward, the Quran begins the description of تَرْكِيه or means of national progress spoken of in 2:130, reference to "Signs" and "the Book" and "Wisdom" having already been made.

### 251. Commentary:

The clause, *and fight in the cause of Allah*, is addressed to Muslims, who

246. "Who is it that will lend Allāh a goodly loan that He may multiply it for him manifold? And Allah receives and enlarges, and to Him shall you be made to return.<sup>252</sup>

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا  
فِيُضِعَّهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ  
يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْصُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٥٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>57:12, 19; 64:18.

are warned of the fate which overtook the Israelites when they refused to fight the enemy when called upon to do so by Moses. God tells Muslims that a people who fear death do not deserve to live. This is the first secret of national progress which the Quran inculcates, viz. that a people can live and prosper only if they shed the fear of death, and that those who are afraid of death die ignobly.

It is hardly necessary to point out here how well Muslims took this lesson to heart. When the well-equipped force of the Quraish came forth from Mecca to destroy the small and ill-equipped Muslim community of Medina, and the Holy Prophet consulted his followers as to whether they were prepared to face and fight the enemy, they told him that they would not behave like the companions of Moses who said to him, *Go thou and thy Lord and fight, and here we sit* (5:25) but that they would willingly fight on his right and on his left and in his front and at his back, and the enemy would not reach him except over their corpses, and that they would unhesitatingly plunge their horses even into the raging sea, if he only wished them to do so. The tradition says that when the Holy

Prophet heard these words from his Companions, his face beamed with joy and he said to them, "Then go forth and trust in Allah Who will be with you" (Ṭabarī & Hishām).

The words "All-Hearing" and "All-Knowing" point out that though Muslims were weak and without equipment, yet the help of their Lord was with them, Who heard their prayers and knew their condition.

### 252. Important Words:

اقترض (will lend) is derived from قرض which again is derived from قرض. They say قرض الشيء i.e. he cut or severed the thing. اقرضه means, he gave him a loan. اقرض فلانا means, he cut off for him a portion so that he may requite or recompense it. قرض means, the act of giving a loan; a loan itself; any good or evil act which brings reward or punishment (Lane).

يقبض (receives) is derived from قبض. They say قبض الشيء i.e. he got hold of it; he received it. قبض يده عنه means, he kept back or withdrew his hand from it. قبض الله رزقه means, God straitened his means and lessened his provision (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse gives the second means of national advancement, i.e. free

247. Hast thou not heard of the chiefs of the children of Israel after Moses, when they said to a Prophet of theirs: 'Appoint for us a king that we may fight in

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِلنَّبِيِّ تَهْمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ هَلْ

expenditure in nation-saving and nation-building affairs. If a nation desires to rise and prosper, it must spend money freely for national purposes, which include helping the poor and the needy. The Quran speaks of spending money in the cause of Allah as giving a loan to God, meaning thereby that money spent in the cause of God should not be regarded as something wasted or even consumed. It should be considered as something given to God as a loan which He would return to the lender manifold. The word loan, however, should not cause any misunderstanding. God needs no loans, for He is not only Self-Sufficient, but is also the Supporter and Sustainer of all other beings and things. He has used the term to indicate that one who spends in the cause of Allah will receive an ample reward from Him; his money, as it were, will be returned to him, being multiplied many times.

The interrogative form in the clause, *Who is it that will lend*, is used by way of exhortation, and the words, *a goodly loan*, have been added to indicate that this money is to be spent with a willing and cheerful heart.

It should be noted that apart from specifically national expenditures, the spending of money to help the poor

and the needy also is tantamount to giving a loan to God. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "God will say to the sinful man on the Day of Judgement, O son of man, I fell ill, but you paid Me no visit; I asked you for food, but you gave Me no food; I asked you for water but you gave Me no water. The man will say, O my Lord, when didst Thou fall ill that I did not visit Thee? When didst Thou ask for food that I did not give it to Thee? When didst Thou ask for water that I gave it Thee not?" God will say, O son of man, know you not that one of My servants fell ill and you did not pay him a visit, he asked you for food and you did not give it to him; and he asked you for water and you gave him no water" (Muslim, ch. on *Birri Was-Şilah*). This shows that spending money for the poor and the needy is tantamount to giving money to God.

The words, *Allah receives and enlarges*, signify that God accepts the money spent in His cause and multiplies it exceedingly so that the reward a man gets is out of all proportion to what he spends. The words, *and to Him shall you be made to return*, have been added to point out that, though virtuous men get their reward even in this life, yet what is in store for them in the next is far greater.



the cause of Allah?’ He said: <sup>a</sup>‘Is it not likely that you will not fight, if fighting is prescribed for you?’ They said: ‘What reason have we to abstain from fighting in the cause of Allah when we have been driven forth from our homes and our sons?’ But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back except a small number of them. And Allah knows the transgressors well.<sup>253</sup>

عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَالَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أَخْرَجَنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَاءِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:78.

### 253. Important Words:

الملاء (chiefs) is derived from ملاء. They say ملاء الاناء بالماء i.e. he filled the vessel with water. ملى مرعبا means, he was filled with fright. الملاء means: (1) assembly of persons; (2) chiefs and nobles, for they fill the eyes and hearts of the commoners with awe and admiration; or because with them a meeting becomes full and appears to be properly attended. الملاء الاعلى means, the community of high placed angels (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The Quran now proceeds to give the story of how the different tribes of Israel were welded into one great nation, also noting incidentally the weaknesses displayed by them, so that their example may serve as a lesson to Muslims.

The incident mentioned in the verse

under comment indicates an improvement in the condition of the Israelites in the time to which this verse relates over that of the time of Moses himself. In 5:25 the Quran relates that when Moses exhorted his followers to fight the enemy in the cause of Allah, they replied, *Go thou and thy Lord and fight, and here we sit*. On the contrary, in the present verse the Israelites are reported to have said, *What reason have we to abstain from fighting in the cause of Allah when we have been driven forth from our homes and our sons?* The improvement, however, was more verbal than real; for when the time of actual fighting came, many of these people wavered and refused to fight. The incident thus serves as a grim warning to Muslims to beware of treading the same path.

248. And their Prophet said to them: 'Allah has appointed for you Ṭālūt as a king.' They said: 'How can he have sovereignty over us while we are better entitled to sovereignty than he, and he is not given abundance of wealth?' He said: 'Surely, Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and body.' And "Allah gives sovereignty to whom He pleases and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing."<sup>254</sup>

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:27.

### 254. Important Words:

طالوت (*Ṭālūt*) is the attributive name of an Israelite king who lived about two hundred years before David and about the same number of years after Moses. Most commentators regard *Ṭālūt* to be a name of Hebrew origin and consider him to be synonymous with Saul (1. Sam. ch. 9). As Hebrew is only an offshoot of Arabic, the word *Ṭālūt* appears to be derived from the Arabic root طال i.e. he became tall or high—a description coinciding with the one given in the verse under comment viz. *one increased abundantly in knowledge and body*. It is, however, not right to identify *Ṭālūt* with Saul. The description of the Quran fits more with Gideon (Judg. chs. 6-8) than with Saul. Gideon lived in about 1250

B.C. and the Bible calls him a "mighty man of valour" (Judg. 6:12) which is the same as *Ṭālūt*.

### Commentary:

There has been a difference of opinion as to the identity of the person to whom the name *Ṭālūt* has been applied. According to a number of Muslim commentators, *Ṭālūt* stands for Saul, and the passage refers to the reign of Saul. Christian writers have, however, taken exception to this view. According to them the incidents related in this passage refer to two different periods which are separated from each other by the long interval of 200 years; and these critics refer to this passage as an instance of historical anachronism, found in the Quran. The passage does indeed refer to two different periods, but if

Christian critics had carefully thought over their own history, they would have seen that there is no confusion of dates in the passage in question and that the Quran has here referred to both these periods. Its object in doing so is to show how the unification of the different tribes of Israel began in the time of Gideon (i.e. *Ṭālūt*) two hundred years before David, and was finally consummated in the time of David.

In order to determine the identity of *Ṭālūt*, let us glance over the main incidents related in verse 247 to 252. These are as follows: 1. The people of the period to which *Ṭālūt* belongs had been driven forth from their homes and their children (2:247). 2. One who was not originally a king was appointed as such (2:248). 3. God helped the followers of this king, giving them the *Ṭālūt* as a token of His sovereignty (2:249). 4. The people were tried by means of water (2:250). 5. There existed a great disparity in numbers between these people and the enemy, and the trial reduced their number still further (ibid). 6. In spite of the small number of his followers, this king overcame the enemy (2:252).

Now some of these details do indeed apply to Saul, but there are others which do not. The key words which afford a clue to the identity of *Ṭālūt* are, *Hast thou not heard of the chiefs of the children of Israel after Moses*. The words "after Moses" indicate that the incident belongs to an early period when the Jews as a nation had just begun to take a definite shape in history. For two

hundred years after Moses, the Israelites were divided into different tribes and had no king and no fighting force. In 1256 B.C., owing to their iniquity, God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites who plundered and ravaged them for seven long years, and they were compelled to take refuge in caves (Judg. 6:1, 2). This is why they are represented in the Quran as saying, *we have been driven forth from our homes*. The Midianites attacked them and carried away their sheep and oxen and asses, and destroyed their crops and pillaged them as far as Gaza (Judg. 6:4-6). The Israelites then cried to their Lord, and God raised among them a Prophet; and an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, appointed him king and promised him divine help. Then Gideon said to God, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judg. 6:15). This tallies with the description given in the Quran which represents the chiefs among the Israelites as saying with regard to the new king, *How can he have sovereignty over us while we are better entitled to sovereignty than he and he is not given abundance of wealth* (2:248). What makes the identification of *Ṭālūt* with Gideon still more certain is the fact that it was in the time of Gideon and not Saul that the Israelites were tried by means of water and the description of the trial as given in the Bible (Judg. 7:4-7) is the same as that of the Quran.

From Judg. 7:6, 7 we learn that after the aforesaid trial, there

249. And their Prophet said to them: 'The sign of his sovereignty is that there shall be given you a heart wherein there will be tranquillity from your Lord and a legacy of good left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron—the angels bearing it. Surely, in this there is a Sign for you if you are believers.'<sup>255</sup>

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ  
يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ  
وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ  
تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٤٩﴾

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ع

remained with Gideon only 300 men. It is interesting to note that a Companion of the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "We were 313 men in the Battle of Badr, and this number corresponds to the number of men who followed *Ṭālūt*" (Tirmidhī, ch. on *Siyar*). Thus this tradition also lends support to the conclusion that *Ṭālūt* was no other than Gideon.

What further confirms the identity of *Ṭālūt* with Gideon is that the Hebrew word Gideon is identical in meaning with the Arabic word *Ṭālūt*. The former is derived from a root which in Hebrew means "to fell" (Enc. Bib.) or "to hew" (Jew. Enc.). Thus, Gideon means "one who cuts down his adversary and fells him to the ground" and the Bible itself speaks of Gideon as a "mighty man of valour" (Judg. 6:12), and we have already noted that in Arabic *Ṭala* means one who is tall and towers above others (see Important Words above).

The clause, *how can he have sovereignty over us while we are better entitled to sovereignty than he, and he is not given abundance of*

*wealth*, indicates that the people raised two objections against *Ṭālūt* or Gideon: (1) that he did not belong to a highly placed family and was therefore not entitled to kingship, and (2) that he did not possess the requisite wealth for exercising influence. Both of these are plausible objections that are usually made by ordinary people of the world; but a chosen people guided by the will of the Just and Wise God must think otherwise. With them the real title to sovereignty is neither family status nor wealth but the personal qualities of a man; hence the clause, *surely Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and body*. The superiority of a man in physical and mental faculties coupled with knowledge and prowess must remain the basis for all title to rulership. And in the case of *Ṭālūt* the title had the additional strength of coinciding with the choice of God Who is the best and, in fact, the only true Judge of all titles.

## 255. Important Words:

التابوت (heart) is derived from تاب i.e.

he returned; he returned to God; he repented; he left off the way of sin and began to tread the path of rectitude. التابوت means: (1) a chest or box, as things are repeatedly taken out of, and returned to, it; (2) a coffin or a bier; (3) chest or breast or bosom or the ribs with what they contain, as the heart, etc. (Lane); (4) the heart which is the storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and peace (Mufradāt).

سكينة (tranquillity) is derived from سكن i.e. it became calm and tranquil. سكينة means, peace, tranquillity, calmness, freedom from agitation and disturbance (Aqrab & Lane).

بقية (legacy) is derived from بقى i.e. he or it remained behind; or he or it continued or lasted for long or forever. بقية means, that which remains behind, i.e. legacy; remainder; remains; remnant; residue; relic; the best portion of a thing, as it is always the best part of a thing that survives. فلان بقية القوم means, such a one is the best and the most excellent of the party (Lane).

### Commentary:

Though commentators have differed about the significance of the word تابوت and the Bible mentions it as an "ark" or chest, the description of the Quran definitely shows that the word has been used here in the sense of "heart" or "bosom." The words of the Quran are: *wherein there will be tranquillity from your Lord*. Now this description cannot apply to an ark or a chest; for, far from granting peace and tranquillity to others, the ark

spoken of by the Bible could neither protect the Israelites against defeat nor could it protect itself, and was carried away by the enemy. Even Saul who took with him the ark during his campaigns, suffered crushing defeats, so much so that even the enemy pitied him and he met with an ignominious end. Such an ark could not be a source of tranquillity to the Israelites. What God gave them was a heart full of tranquillity which was aided by angels who buoyed up the Israelites and filled their hearts with courage and perseverance so that, after the coming of the said tranquillity, they successfully resisted the attacks of the enemy and inflicted heavy defeats on them.

Another favour which God conferred on the Israelites has been referred to in the word بقية or legacy. God imbued their hearts with the noble qualities which characterized their ancestors, the people or the descendants of Moses and Aaron. The legacy left by the descendants of Moses and Aaron did not consist of any material things but referred to the good qualities which they were given as the heritage of their great ancestors. This heritage was similar to the one to which reference has been made in the words, *that (he) may be heir to me and to the House of Jacob* (19: 7). Evidently, it is not a material heritage but a spiritual and moral heritage that is mentioned in this verse. Similarly, the followers of Gideon were imbued with a spiritual and moral بقية i.e. such noble

## R. 33.

250. And when Ṭālūt set out with the forces, he said: 'Surely, Allah will try you with a river. So he who drinks therefrom is not of me; and he who tastes it not is assuredly of me, except him who takes a handful of water with his hand.' But they drank of it, except a few of them. And when they crossed it—he and those who believed along with him—they said: 'We have no power today against Jālūt and his forces.' But those who knew for certain that they would *one day* meet Allah said: <sup>a</sup>'How many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah's command! And Allah is with the steadfast.'<sup>256</sup>

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ  
اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ  
فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي  
إِلَّا مَنْ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرَبُوا  
مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ  
لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ  
الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلْقُوا بِاللَّهِ كَمْ مِّنْ  
فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ  
اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:124; 8:66.

attributes of Moses and Aaron and their descendants as God had endowed them with. It was a sign that it was God Who had set up Gideon as king over the tribes of Israel so that he might protect them against the ravages of their enemy and breathe into them a martial spirit, a work which saw its consummation in the days of David.

### 256. Important Words:

نهر (river). The verb نهر means, it flowed with force. They say نهر الدام i.e. the blood poured forth with force.

نهر الماء means, the water poured forth in the land and cut out a channel for itself. النهر (an-nahr) means, a body of flowing water, i.e. stream or river; channel through which such water flows. النهر (an-nahr) means, (1) plenty and abundance; (2) a river channel; (3) a river (Aqrab).

الجنود (forces) is the plural of الجند. They say جند الجنود i.e. he collected or gathered together his forces. الجند means, a force or an army ; helpers (Aqrab).

جَالُوت (Jālūt) is derived from جال i.e.

251. And when they issued forth to encounter Jālūt and his forces, they said: ‘O our Lord, <sup>a</sup>pour forth steadfastness upon

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا  
أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا

<sup>a</sup>3:148, 201; 7:127.

he ran about without stopping. They say جال الفرس في الميدان i.e. the horse galloped about in the field, sometimes going this way and sometimes that way. جال القوم جولة means, the people drew back and then made a joint onslaught. جال بعضهم على بعض means, they assailed or assaulted one another in battle, etc. (Aqrab & Tāj). Thus جالوت is an attributive name meaning, a person or a people who is unruly and moves about attacking and assaulting others. In the Bible the parallel name is Goliath (1 Sam. 17:4) which means, "running, ravaging and destroying spirits" or "a leader or a giant" (Enc. Bib. and Jew. Enc.). The Bible uses the name about one individual but really the word signifies a party of ruthless freebooters, though it may also be applied to certain individuals symbolizing the characteristics of the party. The Quran appears to have used it in both these senses in the verses under comment.

### Commentary:

Self-control and discipline are the key to most successes, and possession of these qualities is necessary to successfully meet God's trials. The present verse speaks of one such trial. The exception of a handful of water was made with a twofold purpose: (1)

to afford the marching force an essential physical relief by permitting them to moisten their parched throats, but at the same time to prevent them from drinking freely, which would have damped their spirits and made them negligent of the enemy; and (2) to make the trial all the more tantalizing, for in many cases it is easier to withhold from a thing altogether than to use it in a strictly limited measure. The Bible mentions the incident in Judg. 7:5-6.

The concluding clause, i.e. *how many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah's command*, contains a mighty lesson of hope for the righteous. When God wills a thing, numbers do not matter. The truth of this statement has been borne out by history in all ages.

The *Jālūt* spoken of in this verse does not signify a person but a people, while the word جنود (forces) points to the helpers and associates of these people. The Bible refers to *Jālūt* under the name of Midianites who pillaged and harassed the Israelites and destroyed their land for several years (Judg. 6:1-6). The Amalekites and all the eastern tribes assisted the Midianites in their raids (Judg. 6:1) and formed "the forces" referred to in the verse.

us, and make our steps firm, and "help us against the disbelieving people."<sup>257</sup>

252. So they routed them by the command of Allah; and David slew Jālūt, and Allah gave him sovereignty and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And <sup>b</sup>had it not been for Allah's repelling men, some of them by the others, the earth would have become filled with disorder. But Allah is Munificent to *all* peoples.<sup>258</sup>

وَأَنْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمُ بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَئِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٥١﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:287; 3:148. <sup>b</sup>22:41.

### 257. Commentary:

The trial by water referred to in the preceding verse and the subsequent exhortation mentioned in the concluding clause of that verse seem to have filled the Israelites with hope and courage. Consequently their prayer in the verse under comment does not betray a defeatist tendency as heretofore shown by them, but a buoyant spirit of hope and good cheer.

### 258. Commentary:

*Ṭālūt* or Gideon was able to defeat *Jālūt* or the Midianites and curb their rising spirits, but their crushing defeat to which the verse refers as the killing of *Jālūt* came in the time of David about two hundred years afterwards. This is why, whereas the defeat of *Jālūt* by *Ṭālūt* has been spoken of by the Quran as هزم i.e. routing, the complete crushing of their power has

been referred to by the world قتل i.e. killing. The Bible speaks of the man defeated by David as Goliath (1 Sam. 17:4), which is similar to *Jālūt*. Probably the attributive name given by the Quran to the people was also borne by their leader in the time of David.

The last clause of the verse, i.e. *and had it not been for Allah's repelling men, some of them by the others, the earth would have become filled with disorder*, gives, in a nutshell, the whole philosophy of all wars of truth and justice. War should be resorted to only as a means of checking disorder and restoring peace, and not for creating disorder and breaking peace. The clause also serves as a criterion between Muslims and their adversaries and beautifully points to the party destined for final victory in the struggle.



253. These are the Signs of Allah; We recite them unto thee with truth. Surely, thou art one of the Messengers.<sup>259</sup>

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ تَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ  
وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢٥٩﴾

254. <sup>a</sup>These Messengers have We exalted, some of them above others: <sup>b</sup>among them there are those to whom Allah spoke; and <sup>c</sup>some of them He exalted by degrees of rank. And <sup>d</sup>We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and strengthened him with the Spirit of Holiness. And if Allah had so willed, those *that came* after them would not have fought with one another after clear Signs had come to them; but they did disagree. <sup>e</sup>Of them were some who believed, and of them were some who disbelieved. And if Allah had so willed, they would not have fought with one another; but Allah does what He desires.<sup>260</sup>

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى  
بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ  
بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ ۖ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ  
مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ۖ  
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَقْتَتَلُوا الَّذِينَ مِنْ  
بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ  
وَلَكِنْ اخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ  
وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ ۖ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا  
أَقْتَتَلُوا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴿٢٦٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>17:56. <sup>b</sup>4:165. <sup>c</sup>4:159; 19:58. <sup>d</sup>2:88. <sup>e</sup>4:56; 10:41.

### 259. Commentary:

The story of *Tālūt*, *Jālūt* and David has been fittingly concluded by God with the verse under comment to point out that these incidents have been referred to by the Quran not by way of telling a story but as divine signs in order to hint that the Prophet of Islam, being also a Messenger of

God, is sure to receive at least the same help and succour as was received by His Messengers of yore.

### 260. Important Words:

اقتتلوا and اقتتل (fought with one another) are derived from قتل i.e. he killed. اقتتلوا means, they fought with, and attempted to kill, one another (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

This verse supplies an answer to an implied question that naturally arises from the preceding verse. The Prophets that had been raised previous to Islam were sent to particular peoples and their missions were confined to specified periods, but the Holy Prophet was sent to all nations and for all times. Hence it may be argued that the case of David or similar other Leaders who had to deal with certain hostile tribes could not apply to him. God answers this implied question by saying that the previous Prophets also were not all alike, for some of them were greater in rank and had to perform more difficult tasks than others. David, for instance, whose name has just been mentioned as the final link in the chain of the Israelite Prophets and kings who had to contend with their enemies, performed a much greater work than many of his predecessors. So the final victory promised to the Holy Prophet should not appear doubtful in the eyes of the people.

The clause, *among them there are those to whom Allah spoke and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank*, does not mean that there are some Prophets to whom Allah does not speak or that among them there are those who are not raised in rank. The expression has been used to point out that there are two kinds of Prophets: (1) those who bring a new Law, i.e. those who receive revelation bearing new and direct commandments from God; and (2)

those who are not Lawgivers, i.e. those whose prophethood consists only in the loftiness of their spiritual rank. By the word "speaking" therefore is here meant a special kind of speaking, i.e. a revelation which brings a new Law. Thus those Messengers who are represented here as having been "spoken to" by God are the Law-giving Prophets, while those who are spoken of here as having been simply raised in rank are those Messengers of God who are raised to the rank of Prophets without being given any new Law. Of Moses who was a Law-giving Prophet the Quran says: *And Allah conversed with Moses particularly and freely* (4:165). That there are two kinds of Prophets, (1) **مكلم** (to whom God speaks particularly), i.e. Lawgivers, and (2) **غير مكلم** (to whom God does not speak in that particular manner), i.e. Non-Lawgivers; is also clear from the sayings of the Holy Prophet. For instance, when asked by Abū Dharr whether Adam was a Prophet, the Holy Prophet is reported to have answered, "Yes, he was a **مكلم** (*Mukallam*) Prophet" (Musnad). The addition of the word *Mukallam* to the word Prophet clearly shows that Prophets are of two classes, *Mukallam* (Lawgivers) and *Ghair Mukallam* (Non-Lawgivers). Adam was a Lawgiver because it was he who brought the elementary Law.

The Arabic clause **منهم من كلم الله و رفع بعضهم درجات** may also be rendered as, "Among them there is he to whom Allah spoke and one of them He

**R. 34.**

255. O ye who believe! <sup>a</sup>spend out of what We have bestowed on you before the day comes wherein there shall be no buying and selling, <sup>b</sup>nor

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ  
مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعَ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ  
وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ ۖ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ

<sup>a</sup>2:196; 14:32; 47:39; 57:11; 63:11. <sup>b</sup>14:32; 43:68.

exalted by degrees of rank." In this case the clause would signify that by the Prophet to whom Allah spoke is meant Moses and by the Prophet whom He exalted by degrees of rank is meant the Holy Prophet to whom God did not only speak, as He speaks to all Prophets, but whom He raised above all others by so many degrees.

The clause, *And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs*, does not mean that other Prophets were not granted such proofs. As a matter of fact, all Prophets are given clear proofs and all are strengthened with the Spirit of Holiness; but here God makes particular mention of Jesus in order to refute the objections of the Jews who declared that he had shown no Sign and that he was possessed with an Evil Spirit (Luke 11:15, 16). The Quran declares that Jesus was not an impostor, as the Jews believe, but a true Prophet, and that he was not possessed with the Devil but, like all other holy men, was aided with the Spirit of Holiness. In this connection see also note on 2:88.

The Arabic clause translated as, *if Allah had so willed, those that came after them would not have fought with*

*one another*, does not mean, as some may wrongly think, that God is the originator of differences. The expression like لَوْ شَاءَ according to the Quranic idiom, does not simply mean "if Allah had willed" but "if Allah had acted according to His will", i.e. if He had enforced His will. In fact, Allah has, in His infinite wisdom, made man free to choose or reject a thing as he likes. That being so, differences are sure to arise among men. But God does not remain a placid on-looker; for whenever differences become vast and acute, He raises a new Reformer. This is why when discord and disagreements began to rend the ranks of the followers of the previous Prophets, God, in accordance with His old law, raised the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The words, *Allah does what He desires*, further indicate that the infinite wisdom of God demanded that man should be made a free agent. So God does not compel anyone to adopt this course or that. He has given man the power to choose the good or the evil course as he may like and God rewards him accordingly; He does not force anyone to accept the truth; nor should the Faithful.

friendship, <sup>a</sup>nor intercession; and it is those who disbelieve that do wrong *to themselves*.<sup>261</sup>

الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٥٩﴾

256. Allah—there is no God but Him, <sup>b</sup>the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:49. <sup>b</sup>3:3; 20:112; 25:59.

### 261. Important Words:

بيع (buying and selling) is derived from باع i.e. he sold; or he bought; or he bartered (Aqrab).

خلة (friendship) is derived from خل. They say خل الشيء i.e. he pierced the thing and made a hole through it. خل في دعائه means, he was very particular in his prayer. خل اليه means, he was in need of his help and support. خاله means, he made friends with him and took him as brother. خلة is, therefore, that friendship or love which penetrates the heart and takes root in it. خليل is one whose friendship and love is very deep and sincere; a most loving and bosom friend (Aqrab). The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "If I had taken anyone as my خليل I would have taken Abū Bakr as such, but my خليل is God" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Manāqibun-Nabī*).

شفاعة (intercession). See note on 2:49.

### Commentary:

Though, as the preceding verses point out, the final victory of the Holy Prophet of Islam was sure, yet the path before Muslims was not strewn with roses. They had to make great sacrifices in order to reach the

goal. It is to this fact that the verse under comment points. It makes particular reference to financial sacrifices.

The words, *wherein there shall be no buying and selling*, do not mean that there will be no trade and commerce on the Day of Judgement, but that on that great day nobody will be able to buy salvation, which will depend only on one's good works coupled with God's grace. The only buying or selling that will be of avail to men on the Day of Judgement will be that which they shall have made in their present life (9:111).

The words, *nor friendship*, signify that there will be no occasion for forming new friendships on that day. Those, however, who will have taken God as their friend in their life on this earth will certainly benefit by that friendship. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it says: *Friends on that day shall be foes to one another, except the God-fearing* (43:68). The righteous have God as their friend, and He will continue to be their friend on the Day of Judgement!

For شفاعة (intercession), see note on 2:49.

sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. <sup>a</sup>Who is he that will intercede with Him except by His permission? <sup>b</sup>He knows what is before them and what is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth; and the care of them burdens Him not; and He is the High, the Great.<sup>262</sup>

وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَن ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ  
إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا  
خَلْفَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ  
إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمُوتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ  
الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٢٦٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:49. <sup>b</sup>20:111.

### 262. Important Words:

الحي (the Living), of which the verb form is حي i.e. he lived or he had life, is an attribute of God, signifying that God is the only Being Who is deathless and lives by Himself—He needs no support, He is eternal and everlasting (Mufradāt & Lane). This is "life" in the truest sense of the word, and such life is enjoyed by God alone.

القيوم (Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining) is another attribute of God. The word is derived from قام i.e. he stood erect. القيوم means, the Being Who not only stands by Himself, requiring the support of none, but Who supports all others (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

سنة (slumber) is the noun-infinitive from سنا i.e. sleep or slumber took

hold of him. سنة means, heaviness of limbs and eyes preceding sleep; sleep or slumber itself; negligence or unguardedness (Aqrab)

كرسى (knowledge) is derived from كرس. They say كرس البناء i.e. he raised the walls of a house. كرسى means, a throne or a chair or a stool, in fact, anything used for sitting on; buttress of a wall; knowledge; dominion and power. Hence, الكراسى means, men of learning (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

This verse is known as آية الكرسي (Āyatul-Kursī) and is considered to be one of the most important verses, beautifully describing the Unity of God and His great attributes. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the Āyatul-Kursī is the loftiest verse in the Quran (Muslim). The

257. "There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah <sup>b</sup> has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.<sup>263</sup>

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ  
الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ  
بِاللهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ  
لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>10:100; 11:119; 18:30; 76:4. <sup>b</sup>31:23.

verse supplies an answer to an implied question. Even if Muslims made the sacrifices required of them in 2:255, the task before them was so great that, based on worldly calculations, there appeared no hope of success for them. How then is the promised victory to come? The verse under comment provides a telling answer. The world was not without a Master. The destinies of its people were controlled by a Being Whose power was limitless, Whose knowledge knew no bounds, Who was ever vigilant, ever watchful, in Whose hands were the entire resources of the earth and the heavens. If such a Being willed the triumph of a party, who was there to thwart His way? The promised victory must come.

For a detailed treatment of the subject of intercession see note on 2:49. The reason why no one shall be allowed to intercede for any person except with the permission of God is that nobody knows what is in the minds of men and consequently none

is in a position to intercede for another. God alone knows the secrets of men's hearts and hence there can be no intercession except by His permission, for He alone knows who is deserving of it.

The clause, *they encompass nothing of His knowledge*, means that God's knowledge is unlimited; while the knowledge of others, whoever they may be, is limited; even Prophets know no more than what is apparent of the spiritual condition of their followers.

The word كَرَسَى (knowledge) may signify either knowledge or power; both give equally good meanings and are almost equally applicable. Allah's knowledge is as extensive as His power. Knowledge and power are indeed the two great pillars on which the throne of God and, for that matter, the controlling power of everyone in authority rests.

### 263. Important Words:

الطَّاغُوت (those who transgress) is derived from طَغَا i.e. he transgressed; he exceeded the just limit. Hence

طاغوت is primarily one who exceeds the bounds laid down for him. The Devil (i.e. the Evil One) or such men as turn others from the right path as well as all idols come under the word *Ṭāghūt*. The word is used both as singular and plural as in 4:61 and 2:258.

عرا (handle) being derived from عر means: (1) the handle of a bucket or a mug, etc.; (2) a ring; etc. which is grasped and clung to for support, or anything which serves as a support (3) a pasture that remains green even in time of drought; (4) the best and excellent part of property and wealth (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The injunction to make special sacrifices in the cause of religion and to fight the enemies of Islam who had transgressed against the Faithful was likely to cause the misunderstanding that Allah desired Muslims to use force for propagating their religion. The verse under comment removes this misunderstanding. The object for which Muslims have been commanded to take up arms against the disbelievers is not to force them to accept Islam, but only to check mischief and put a stop to persecution. The verse enjoins Muslims in the clearest and strongest of words not to resort to force for converting non-Muslims to Islam. In the face of this teaching embodied in the words, *There should be no compulsion in religion*, it is the height of injustice to accuse Islam of countenancing the use of force for the propagation of its teaching.

The verse not only gives the commandment that in no case is force to be resorted to for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to Islam, but also gives the reason why it should not be used, saying: *Surely, right has become distinct from wrong*, i.e. the true path has become distinct from the wrong one and therefore there is no justification for using force. Islam is a manifest truth. Anyone who sincerely desires to see this truth can easily see it; but if there is a person who does not desire to see it, no force can possibly make him do so. One only needs to point out its beauties to non-Muslims; it rests with them to accept it or reject it as they like. ايمان or *faith*, as defined by Islam, consists in believing something with the heart or the mind and expressing that belief with the tongue. No force on earth can bring about that change.

The person who sticks to true faith and shuns false ones is here represented as laying hold of a strong عروة (*'urwah*) which word, as shown above, gives a number of meanings. Taking it in the first-mentioned sense, i.e. the handle of a mug, etc., the Quran compares Islam to the pure life-giving liquid which is put into a mug, and the believer is represented as taking fast hold of the handle thereof. Taking the word in the second sense, i.e. anything which is grasped and clung to for support; the true faith is represented as something on which complete reliance can be placed in all circumstances. If one adheres to it, there is no fear of one's stumbling or falling down. Following

258. <sup>a</sup>Allah is the friend of those who believe: <sup>b</sup>He brings them out of darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, <sup>c</sup>their friends are the transgressors who bring them out of light into darkness. These are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.<sup>264</sup>

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ لَا يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾

### R. 35.

259. Hast thou not heard of him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingdom? When Abraham said, <sup>d</sup>"My Lord is He Who gives life and causes

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ ۖ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ ۚ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي

<sup>a</sup>3:69. <sup>b</sup>5:17; 65:12. <sup>c</sup>7:28; 16:101. <sup>d</sup>3:157; 9:116; 40:69; 57:3.

the third significance, i.e. a pasture that remains green even in time of drought, Islam has been likened to a grazing ground the herbage of which is everlasting. There can be no spiritual famine in Islam. Following the last-mentioned meaning of عروة Islam is represented as a storehouse of spiritual treasures that are without equal.

### 264. Commentary:

The preceding verse spoke of "truth" and "error" as resulting from belief in Allah and belief in *Tāghūt* respectively. The present verse further develops the idea. According to Arabic idiom, the expression, *to bring out of darkness into light*, means, "to lead to success and happiness not only in the spiritual but

also in the physical sense"; and the opposite of it means, "to lead to failure and grief".

The word *Tāghūt*, explained under the preceding verse, here mainly refers to such mischievous leaders as turn people away from the right path. Through them disbelievers are being led to failure and grief and are also gradually losing whatever light of faith they possessed before the advent of the Holy Prophet. Their rejection of him has also led them to disown many truths which they acknowledged before. Add to this their deprivation of the light of the new faith and the darkness becomes complete. On the contrary, Islam is not only bringing new light to its adherents but is also bringing them success and happiness.



death,' he said, 'I *also* give life and cause death.' Abraham said, 'Well, Allah brings the sun from the East; bring it thou from the West.' Thereupon the infidel was dumbfounded. And Allah guides not the unjust people.<sup>265</sup>

بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ  
الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ  
لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٦٥﴾

### 265. Commentary:

The preceding verses spoke of the great rise and success in store for Muslims—their being brought out of darkness into light. Now the Quran proceeds to illustrate the promised rise and advancement. It takes us back to the days of Abraham.

An incident in the life of the great Patriarch has been cited to illustrate the truth of the statement made in the previous verse, *viz.* that God is the friend of believers; He helps them against their enemies and shows them the way of success, leading them out of darkness into light.

Abraham was a native of Ur of the Chaldees. His people worshipped the stars and their chief god was the Sun. Their greatest god was Merodach (or Madruk), who was originally the god of the morning and the spring sun. He was also called Bel, i.e. Lord (Enc. Bib. and Enc. Rel. Eth. ii. 296).

Abraham was hostile to the worship of idols and false deities and vehemently preached against them. He once set fire to a house which contained wooden images. On another occasion, he broke certain idols to pieces and burned them, whereupon he was produced before

the king, whose name is recorded as Nimrod (Gen. 10:8, 9 and Jew. Enc. under Abraham) and who was also worshipped by the people as a representative of their deities. The king, it appears, threatened Abraham with ruin and death, to which Abraham firmly and boldly replied that he could do him no harm, for it was His Lord God Who granted life and caused death. As the king laid claim to godhead, he wrathfully rejoined that it was he who exercised these powers. Now Abraham knew that Nimrod and his people believed that all life depended on the sun, so if it was true that it was the king who controlled life and death, it meant that even the sun was under the control of the king and that the final power of life and death attributed by Nimrod and his men to the sun was a mere farce. So he pertinently asked the king to send back the sun from the west to the east (i.e. put it aside), for in such case the sun could not be recognized as the final controlling power. The king was in a fix. He could not say that he did not possess the power to send back the sun, for that would have exposed him. At the same time he could not say that it was he who caused the sun to rise from

260. Or like him who passed by a town which had fallen down upon its roofs, *and* exclaimed, ‘When will Allah restore it to life after its destruction?’ Then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He raised him, and said: ‘How long hast thou remained *in this state*?’ He answered, ‘I have remained a day or part of a day.’ He said: ‘Nay, thou hast remained *in this state* for a hundred years. Now look at thy food and thy drink; they have not rotted. And look at thy ass. And *We have done this* that We may make thee a Sign unto men. And <sup>a</sup>look at the bones, how We set them and then clothe them with flesh.’ And when this became clear to him, he said, ‘I know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills.’<sup>266</sup>

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ  
عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ  
مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ  
بَعَثَهُ ۖ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ ۖ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا  
أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ  
عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ  
يَتَسَنَّهْ ۖ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ  
آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ  
نُنْشِرُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا ۖ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ  
لَهُ ۚ قَالَ أَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>23:15.

the east and set in the west, for his people looked upon the sun as the supreme deity, superior to the king himself, and if he had claimed any power over the sun, he would have surely roused the ire of his people against him. So he was dumbfounded and knew not what reply to make.

### 266. Important Word:

خاوية (fallen) is derived from خوى.

They say خوى البيت i.e. (1) the house fell down in ruins; (2) the house became empty and untenanted (Aqrab).

عرش (roofs) is the plural of عرش (roof). They say عرش i.e. he built a house. عرش البيت means, he raised the roof of the house. عرش means: (1) the roof of a house; (2) the throne or the ceremonious chair of a king; (3) the pillar, etc. supporting a thing; (4)

honour and prowess; (5) leaders and chiefs among men; (6) tent, canopy, shed etc. affording shade; (7) trellis supporting vines (Aqrab & Lane).

يتسنة (have rotted) is derived from سته i.e. (1) it passed through a time extending over years; (2) it (food, etc.) became altered and rotten by the lapse of years or absolutely. تسنه gives the same meaning as سته (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The preceding verse contained one illustration of how Allah brings His friends out of darkness into light. The present verse cites, as hinted in the words, *or like him*, another illustration of how He breathes new life into a people after they have fallen and become degraded.

The ruined town referred to in the verse is Jerusalem which was laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar. The person who, as the verse says, passed by it was Ezekiel, the Prophet; and the words *which had fallen down upon its roofs* hint that it was soon after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar that Ezekiel passed by the town. Ezekiel was among the Israelite captives whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon and who, in accordance with an ancient custom, were made to pass by the ruins of the town so that they might witness with their own eyes how their city had been laid in ruins by the conqueror. Ezekiel, who was a great well-wisher of his people, was immensely pained to see the ruins of the sacred city and pathetically asked God when the time would come when

the ruined city would be restored to life, i.e. when its inhabitants, the children of Israel, would come back to it, rebuild it and make it prosperous once more. This prayer, it appears, was heard by God Who showed him in a vision that the restoration asked for would come in a hundred years.

The clause *then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years* does not mean that Ezekiel was actually made to die and then raised to life again. It was, in fact, a vision which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 37). The Quran sometimes mentions scenes seen in a vision as if they had actually happened, without stating that they were witnessed in a vision or a dream (e.g. 12:5). What actually happened was that Ezekiel saw in a vision that he had died and remained dead for a hundred years and then had come back to life. As he was the representative of his people, his death signified the death of the Israelites. Thus God informed him through this vision that the children of Israel would remain in their state of captivity and lifelessness for a hundred years, after which a new life would be given them and they would return to inhabit their sacred city. And this dream or vision actually turned out to be true. For Jerusalem was first invaded by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. and again in 587 B.C., when after a long siege the city was totally destroyed by his general in 586 B.C. Ezekiel probably saw the vision in 586 B.C. The city was rebuilt about

100 years after its destruction and thus the vision came true.

It is wrong to think that God actually caused Ezekiel to die and that he remained dead for a hundred years and was then brought back to life; for that would have been no answer to his prayer, which did not pertain to the death and resurrection of any individual but to that of a town which was lying in ruins.

The words, *which had fallen down upon its roofs*; point out that Ezekiel saw the ruins soon after the destruction (not necessarily the complete and final destruction) of the town when the fallen roofs were still to be seen under the debris of the walls.

The words, *I have remained a day or part of a day*, are intended to express indefiniteness of time and mean, according to the Quranic usage, that Ezekiel did not know how long he had remained in that state. The words have been used in this sense in another passage of the Quran as well: *They said, We have tarried a day or part of a day. Others said, Your Lord knows best the time you have tarried* (18:20). Again, *They will say, We tarried a day or part of a day, but ask those who keep count* (23:114). In fact, *يوم* (day) here does not mean a day of 24 or 12 hours but time absolutely (see 1:4). The clause, *I have remained a day or part of a day*, may also refer to the time for which Ezekiel slept or the time he took in seeing the vision or the dream. Apparently Ezekiel thought that he was being asked about the

duration of the time of the vision.

The clause, *Nay, thou hast remained in this state for a hundred years*, points out that although in one sense he had remained in that state for a hundred years (for he had dreamt that he had been dead for a hundred years), yet the statement that he had tarried for a day or part of a day, was also correct, for the time spent in seeing the vision was naturally very short. To bring home this fact to the mind of Ezekiel, God directed his attention to his food and drink and to the ass. That his food and drink had not become stale and that his ass was still alive, showed that he had really tarried only for a short time. The words *and look at thy ass* also indicate that Ezekiel saw the vision while sleeping in his fields with his ass by his side, for while in captivity the Israelites were made to work in the fields as farmers.

The words *that We may make thee a Sign unto men* show that Ezekiel was to be made a Sign to men inasmuch as his vision, according to which Jerusalem was to become re-inhabited by the children of Israel, was to come true. The words, *look at the bones*, are intended to echo the words used by the children of Israel in those days of misery, viz. that they had become like dry bones and there was no hope of their being ever endued with new life (Ezek. 37:11, 12). The words along with the accompanying clause meant that God had power to clothe the bones with flesh and to breathe new life into them. The bones were first to be set

261. And *remember* when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He said, 'Hast thou not believed?' He said, 'Yes, but *I ask this* that my heart may be at rest.' He answered, 'Take four birds and make them attached to thyself. Then put each of them on a hill; then call them; they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty *and* Wise.'<sup>267</sup>

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ ارْنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي  
الْمَوْتَىٰ ۖ قَالَ أَوْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُ ۖ قَالَ بَلَىٰ  
وَلَكِنِّي ظَنَمْتُ لِقَلْبِي ۖ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً  
مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ  
كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِيَنَّكَ  
سَعْيًا ۖ وَاعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝٢٦٧

or placed in position and thereafter clothed with flesh, i.e. the Israelites, then like dead bones, were first to be brought back to their town and then the process of the clothing of the bones with flesh, i.e. the rebuilding of the town, etc. was to be completed.

The vision of Ezekiel has been mentioned in the Bible in chapter 37 of his book.

### 267. Important Words:

تحي الموتى (Thou givest life to the dead). For the meaning of حياة (life) and موت (death) and ميت (dead person) see 2:20; 2:29; 2:57 and 2:74.

يطمئن (be at rest) is derived from طمئن. They say طمئن ظهره i.e. he bent his back low. طمئن الشيء means, he made the thing calm and set it at rest. اطمأن means, it or he was at rest; it or he became calm after being agitated; it or he became docile and submissive. المطمئن means, (1) one who is calm and tranquil or in a state of rest or ease; that which is motionless and

stationary; (2) if used in connection with some piece of land, it means a low-lying, soft piece of land (Aqrab).

صهرن اليك (make them attached to thyself). صهرن is derived from صار with واو as the central root letter. They say صار الشيء الى نفسه i.e. he inclined the thing to himself. صار صاهه means, he inclined his face towards me. صرت الغصن لاجتنى الثمر means, I inclined the branch towards myself in order to pluck the fruit. صار with ي as the central root letter, means, he cut a thing, etc. into pieces (Aqrab). The Quran uses here صار with واو as the central root letter as the dammah in صهرن indicates. Moreover, the preposition الى (to) determines the significance of the word in the sense of inclining or attaching and not cutting.

جزاء (each) is derived from جزاء. They say جزأ الشيء i.e. he divided the thing into parts. So جزء means, part or portion or division of a thing (Lane). Thus, if a thing consists of, and

comprises, a group, the word part or division would signify each member of it.

### **Commentary:**

This verse provides yet another illustration of the process of life and death arranged by God in this world. In other words, the rise of a fallen nation is further discussed. Abraham asked God to show him how He caused a people to come to life after they had become fallen and degraded.

The difference between إيمان (belief) and اطمینان (heart being at rest) is that in the former state one simply believes that God can do a thing, while in the latter one receives the assurance that the thing would be done in his case also. Abraham did indeed believe that God could bring a dead people to life, but what he desired was the personal satisfaction of knowing that He would do so in the case of his own posterity as well; hence the words, *so that my heart may be at rest*.

The verse proceeds to describe a vision of Abraham. By asking him to take four birds, God hinted that his posterity would rise and fall four times. This rise and fall was witnessed twice among the Israelites, and the same phenomenon was to be repeated among the followers of the Holy Prophet of Islam who was descended from Abraham through Ishmael. The power of the Jews, the progeny of Abraham through Isaac, was crushed twice, first by Nebuchadnezzar and then by Titus (the Quran, 17:5-8; the Bible, II Kings ch. 25 and Enc. Brit. under

Jews); and each time God raised them after their fall, the second revival having been brought about by the acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Emperors. As to the power of Islam, it was first rudely shaken when Baghdad fell to the arms of the Tartars, after which it again revived owing to the conquerors being won over to Islam. The second fall came later when there was a general and wholesale decline of Muslims both in the spiritual and the political field. The final rise is being arranged by God through the Ahmadiyya Movement founded by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Referring to the verse under comment, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "We are more deserving of entertaining شك than Abraham" (Muslim). Here شك does not mean "doubt" but an intense hidden desire anxiously awaiting fulfilment, for the Holy Prophet never entertained any doubt. This shows that Abraham also never doubted and his question was not prompted by doubt but simply by an anxious desire. He had firm faith in the power of God and fully believed that He could restore a fallen people to prosperity; what he wanted was simply the satisfaction of his hidden desire, i.e. an assurance that God would do so in the case of his people also. The word شك therefore here only means the feeling of anxiety in the mind, or the state of commotion or disturbance of the heart and mind (Lane).

The double fall and subsequent rise

**R. 36.**

262. The <sup>a</sup>similitude of those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies *it* further for whomsoever He pleases; and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.<sup>268</sup>

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ  
اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ  
سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ  
يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:266; 30:40.

of the Israelites and of the posterity of Ishmael making the total number of such phenomena four may be interpreted in another way also. The Israelites were a fallen people before Moses and God raised them through him. They fell again before the time of Jesus and were again given new life through him. Similarly, the Ishmaelites were a fallen people before the advent of the Holy Prophet who gave them new life, and they are again a fallen people now when they are being given a new life by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Many commentators have translated the word صرهن as, "cut them into pieces and mince them", but this is clearly wrong; for as explained under Important Words above صار يصور (with و as the central root letter) means "inclining" and not "cutting", particularly when it is used with the preposition الى. So the expression صرهن would mean "make them inclined towards thyself", so that they may become attached to thee. In this case

the placing of a جزء of the four birds each on a hill would mean, putting each separate bird on a separate hill, and not placing portions of the minced meat thereon. The commandment to place the four birds separately on separate hills is to point to the fact that the rise and fall of the progeny of Abraham would take place at four distinct and separate times. The word جزء has been used in this sense elsewhere also (15:45).

**268. Commentary:**

In the foregoing verses, it was pointed out that it is a law of God that He gives new life to deserving nations after they have become dead, and the case of the Israelites was mentioned as an instance. It was further indicated that the progeny of Abraham would rise four times, the Israelites and the Ishmaelites each rising twice. Now, in order to prepare Muslims for the promised rise, God reverts to the means of national progress and exhorts the Faithful to

263. They who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah, then "follow not up what they have spent with taunt or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.<sup>269</sup>

264.<sup>b</sup> A kind word and forgiveness are better than

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
ثُمَّ لَا يَتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى<sup>ل</sup>  
لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ  
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ<sup>٢٦٣</sup>

قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ

<sup>a</sup>2:265; 74:7. <sup>b</sup>47:22.

spend freely in the cause of God, pointing out that their case is like that of a seed which is multiplied 700 times and even more. Thus 700 times is the least reward that will be given to Muslims, and there is no limit to what God will bestow over and above this. History shows that this promise was fulfilled to the very letter; for the reward which God gave to the early Muslims in this world was not only 700 times of what they spent in the cause of Allah but immeasurably greater; and the reward in the world to come will certainly be greater still.

### 269. Important Words:

مَنَّا (taunt). They say من عليه i.e. (1) he did him a favour; (2) he talked of, or referred to, the favour he had done him and thereby taunted him with it (Aqrah). So من means both a favour as well as a reference to it with a view to taunting.

### Commentary:

Every good may be abused, and the abuse of spending in the cause of Allah is to follow it with من i.e. boastfully speaking of one's services,

and اذى i.e. following up a good act with an injury. Those who expend their wealth in the cause of Allah, are prohibited from making unnecessary mention of the money they spend and the services they render to Islam; for doing so would amount to من (taunt). Similarly they are forbidden to demand anything in return for their contributions; for this would amount to اذى (injury). Some men expect worldly advantages or try to seek help in their mundane affairs in return for their services in the cause of religion, and if such help is not forthcoming, they are displeased; or sometimes they desire to exact some work from those who are engaged in the service of religion and whom they help with money. All this would come under the definition of the word اذى; for such demands cause great injury and annoyance. Whether in the help of the community or of an individual, Islam condemns resort to من and اذى. It enjoins us to serve, but expects us to forget that we are rendering a service, for that would mar the good effect thereof.



charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-Sufficient, Forbearing.<sup>270</sup>

يَسْبِغْهَا أَذَى ط وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٧٠﴾

265. O ye who believe! <sup>a</sup>render not vain your alms by taunt and injury, like him <sup>b</sup>who spends his

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَتِكُمْ  
بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:263. <sup>b</sup>4:39; 8:48.

### 270. Important Words:

غنى (Self-Sufficient) is from the verb غنى which means, he was or became free from want; he was in a state of competence or sufficiency; he was rich and wealthy. Thus غنى means, one free from want; one who is in a state of competence or sufficiency; one who is rich and wealthy. الغنى is one of the names of God, meaning the Self-Sufficient; One Who has no need of anyone in anything (Lane).

### Commentary:

The divine attribute of Self-Sufficient has been used to suggest that if money spent in the cause of God is to be followed by "taunt" and "injury," it need not be spent at all, for He is Self-Sufficient. He needs no money. The order to spend is meant for the good of those who spend. So if the act of spending is abused and becomes a source of demoralization, God does not approve of such spending. The attribute حليم (Forbearing) which also means "wise" and "intelligent" has been used here to suggest that the injunctions to spend money in the cause of God are given not because He stands in need of money but because He, the Wise

God, knows that such acts are conducive to the good of man himself, the significance of "Forbearing" hinting that though God is slow in punishing, yet if such men continue undoing their own good actions by injuring the feelings of others, He would have to chastise them.

The clause, *A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury*, signifies that it is better to refrain from spending at all, if spending is to be followed by injury. In that case one should say قول معروف i.e. a kind word of sympathy or excuse to the person who asks for help, rather than give him help and then follow it up with injury. One should also observe an attitude of مغفرة (forgiveness) which literally means "covering up", i.e. one should cover and conceal the want of the person who comes for help and refrain from talking about it to others so that he may not feel ashamed. Or مغفرة may signify forgiveness on the part of him who asks for help, i.e. he should forgive the person who expresses his inability to render help. Again, in case the spending spoken of in the verse refers to spending in national

wealth to be seen of men, and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like the case of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls, leaving it bare, smooth and hard. "They shall not secure aught of what they earn. And Allah guides not the disbelieving people."<sup>271</sup>

النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ<sup>ط</sup>  
فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ  
فَأَصَابَهُ وَايَلٌ فَتَرَكَّهُ صَلْدًا<sup>ط</sup>  
لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا<sup>ط</sup>  
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ<sup>٢٧١</sup>

<sup>ط</sup>14:19.

needs, قول معروف (kind word) would mean expression of good opinion, i.e. if one cannot spend without following it up with injury, i.e. without criticizing those responsible for national expenditure, one had better refrain from spending at all.

### 271. Important Words:

رأى (to be seen) is derived from رأى i.e. he saw with his physical or mental eyes. الرئاء means, to make a show of goodness or virtue without there being any sincere or genuine feeling behind it, simply to be seen of men (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

صفوان (smooth rock) is in the measure of رحمان being derived from صفا i.e. it became clear or pure and was free from dirt, etc. صفوان besides being used in the singular number is also the plural of صفاة meaning, a smooth and hard rock (Aqrab).

وايل (heavy rain) is derived from وبل. They say وبله بالعصا i.e. he beat or battered him with a rod continuously. وبلت السماء means, the sky poured forth heavy rain (Aqrab).

صلد (bare, smooth and hard) is from صلد. They say صلد الزند i.e. the material, meant for producing fire gave out a sound but no Spark. صلد الارض means, the earth became hard. صلد السائل means, he turned away the beggar without giving him anything. صلد is, therefore, spoken of such rock or piece of ground as is hard and smooth and grows nothing (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that a Muslim who follows up his charity with taunt and injury, undoes his own good act and will have no reward with God. He is like a disbeliever who spends merely to be seen of and praised by men. The words, 'and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day' have been added because sometimes even a believer does a deed to be seen of men, and that act of his has a useful purpose. For instance, it is on record that once a Companion of the Holy Prophet was seen strutting before the hostile Quraish of Mecca. When the Prophet

266. And the case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to strengthen their souls is like the case of a garden on elevated ground. Heavy rain falls on it so that it "brings forth its fruit twofold. And if heavy rain does not fall on it, then light rain suffices. And Allah sees what you do.<sup>272</sup>

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ  
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ  
كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ  
أَكْلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ  
فَطَلَّ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:262.

saw the man thus walking, he said, "This gait is hateful to God, but on the present occasion it is not so." In fact, there had been an outbreak of fever among the Companions who were greatly weakened thereby, and the aforesaid Muslim walked with a boastful gait in order to make a display of his strength so that the enemy might not think that the Muslims had been weakened by fever. This turned an ordinarily reprehensible act into a praiseworthy one. Elsewhere Muslims have been bidden to spend their money not only secretly but also openly (2:275), and the object underlying this injunction is that other Muslims, seeing a brother of theirs expending money in the cause of God, may be induced to follow his good example. But he who has no faith in God expends his money openly solely with the object of winning the good opinion of men, and such a one has no reward with God.

The concluding portion of the verse

likens a disbeliever to a smooth rock which is not fit for producing a crop; but sometimes, when it is covered with a layer of dust, some corn may grow on it, i.e. when circumstances are favourable and such person does some really good deed, he derives some benefit from it. But when he spends money merely for the sake of display and show, his good deeds are wasted, just as a heavy rain washes away the dust from the surface of a smooth and hard rock, leaving it bare and unproductive.

### 272. Important Words:

ثَبَّتَ (strengthen) is derived from ثَبَتَ which means, he or it subsisted or lasted; he or it became fixed or stationary at a place; he was firm, stable, steadfast and unwavering. ثَبَتَ الامر means, the matter became proved and determined. ثَبَتَهُ means, he made a person or thing fixed and stationary, rendering him or it unable to move; he imprisoned him or inflicted on him a crippling injury. ثَبَتَ الحق means, he

267. Does any of you desire that there should be for him a garden of palm trees and vines with streams flowing beneath it, and with all kinds of fruit for him therein—while old age has stricken him and he has weak offspring—and that a fiery whirlwind should smite it and it be *all* burnt? Thus does Allah

أَيُّودٌ أَحَدَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضِعْفًا ط فَاصْبَاهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ط كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ

strengthened or reinforced the truth with clear arguments. ثَبَّتَهُ (thabbatahū) means, he made a person or thing firm, steadfast, unwavering and fixed; he strengthened him or it so as to make him or it fit to endure all trials and shakings (Aqrab & Lane).

رَهْبُوتَة (elevated ground) is derived from رَهَبَا. They say رَهَبَا الْمَالِ i.e. the money increased and became augmented. رَهَبَا الرَّابِيَةِ means, the child grew up. رَهَبَا means, he climbed the height. رَهْبُوتَة or رَاهِبِيَةِ means, a hill or elevated ground (Aqrab). رَهَبَا (interest) is also from the same root and is so called because it is looked upon as a sure and unfailing means of increasing and multiplying wealth.

### Commentary:

Spending money in the cause of Allah leads to the strengthening of the soul. The man who strives in the cause of God by spending his wealth, imposes a burden on himself which makes him still more firm and steadfast in his faith. Besides, as he helps others with his money, God helps him and protects him from harm.

The hearts of the believers who spend freely in the cause of God are like elevated ground to which heavy rain, which sometimes proves harmful for low-lying grounds, can do no harm. On the other hand, it is benefited by rain, whether it is heavy or light.

In the verse under comment, *rain* represents charity. Those who spend large amounts are referred to in the words "heavy rain", while those who can afford to spend only small amounts in the cause of Allah are referred to in the words "light rain" (see also 9:79).

Both classes of men are benefited, inasmuch as they are granted more and more power to do good deeds and receive an ample reward from God, Who does not look to the amount of the money spent in His cause but to the proportion it bears to the money retained by the spender for his worldly needs. The word طَل (light rain), besides including the lightest of rains, also means "dew" (Lane) and has been used to point out that even the smallest amounts spent in the cause of Allah has its reward.

make His Signs clear to you that you may ponder.<sup>273</sup>

٣٦  
ع

تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ٣٧

**R. 37.**

268. O ye who believe! spend of the good things that you have earned, and of what We produce for you from the earth; and seek not what is bad to spend out of it when you would not take it yourselves except that you connive at it. And know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praise-worthy.<sup>274</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ٣٨

**273. Important Words:**

ذرية (offspring) is derived from ذر ذرأ ذراً. The verb ذر means, he sprinkled or scattered. They say ذر الحب في الأرض i.e. he scattered the seed in the soil. ذر النبات means the vegetation sprouted forth from the ground. Similarly ذراً means, he increased a thing, etc.; or He (God) created. ذرة of which the plural is ذر means, small ant; motes or dust particles that float about in the air. ذرية means, children, offspring or progeny; human or other race descended from a common ancestor (Aqrah & Tāj).

**Commentary:**

By means of the similitude contained in this verse, a believer is reminded that if he spends his property for show or follows up his charity with taunts and injury, all that he has spent will be wasted, and on the Day of Judgement he will find nothing good in store for him. His

case will be as wretched as that of an old man with little children and large property which, as the result of an accident, is suddenly destroyed, leaving him not only without means of sustenance for himself but also without provision for his children. When a man cannot bear to see himself and his little children go unprovided for in this life, which is after all a very short period, how can he bear that his work for the cause of Allah—a provision for his everlasting life in the next world—should be undone by his own action?

**274. Important Words:**

ام or يم (seek) is derived from يم يموا. They say يم به i.e. he sought it. يم فلاناً برمح means, he sought and singled out that person for attacking with his spear. يم الأمر means, he sought and singled out the affair. يم للصلاة means, he performed what is termed يم for his Prayers, i.e. instead of performing the prescribed ablution with water he

269. "Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you what is foul, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. And Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.<sup>275</sup>

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ  
بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ  
وَفَضْلًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:170; 24:22.

sought dust and touching it with his hands passed them over his face, etc. (Aqrab & Mufradât).

خبِيث (bad) is derived from خَبِث i.e. he or it was or became bad or foul or abominable or wicked or filthy or impure (Lane).

اغْمَض (connive) is derived from اغْمَض which again is derived from غَمَض i.e. it became hidden and concealed. غَمَضَ means, he made his speech obscure, and abstained from making it clear in meaning. اَغْمَضَ means, he closed, or shut his eyes; he connived at something so as to practically treat it as something unseen or hidden. اَغْمَضَ فِي الْبَيْعِ means, he demanded a lowering of the price of a thing owing to its badness. اَغْمَضَ عَنْهُ فِي الْبَيْعِ means, he connived at the bad quality of the thing and was not strict settling its price (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The verse implies that believers should not only spend in the cause of Allah but should spend what is good and pure; for even a lawfully-earned property might include things that are bad. They should not deliberately select worthless and worn out things for the purpose of charity. Old and second-hand things may indeed be

given to the poor, but such things should not be specially selected or singled out for this purpose. Indeed, a believer can be said to have properly discharged his duty for "spending" in the cause of Allah only if he spends "good things".

### 275. Important Words:

فَقْر (poverty). The verb فَقَرَ (*faqara*) means, he dug into the ground; he bored a hole into a pearl, etc.; he cut into and penetrated a thing. فَقِرَ (*faqura*) means, he became poor and needy. فَاقِرَ (*faqira*) means, he had a complaint of his vertebrae. الْفَقْر signifies, poverty; want or need; care and anxiety or disquietude of mind. فُقِيرٌ of which the plural is فُقَرَاءُ is one who is poor and needy; also one having a complaint of the vertebrae, arising from fracture or disease (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The most handy weapon for Satan is to suggest to the people that if they spend their wealth in charity, they will become poor. But this is a most foolish suggestion; for, if people obey Satan, the result will be فقر i.e. national interests will suffer and the country will definitely decline in prosperity; and if the country

270. <sup>a</sup>He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would be reminded except those endowed with understanding.<sup>276</sup>

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ  
الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا  
يَذْكُرُ إِلَّا أَهْلَ الْآلِبَابِ ﴿٢٧٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>17:40.

declines, individuals cannot remain unaffected. Again, if we do not help our less fortunate countrymen, they will be tempted to resort to فحشاء i.e. foul and unfair means, and the community will become degraded in the eyes of others.

Two pairs of words occur in this verse and their order deserves notice. According to their significance, فضل (bounty) corresponds to فقر (poverty) and مغفرة (forgiveness or the covering of shortcomings) corresponds to فحشاء (foul or infamous conduct). Now, following the above significance of the words, the word فضل ought to have preceded the word مغفرة. But this order has not been observed in the verse, the reason being that whereas the first result of accepting Satan's suggestion, as mentioned in the present verse, is فقر and then comes فحشاء, the first and immediate consequence of one's spending one's wealth in charity is مغفرة and فضل comes afterwards.

Another reason for this order is that Satan cares more for wealth than good name; hence in his case فقر precedes فحشاء. But the righteous care more for God's forgiveness than for

worldly prosperity, hence in their case the precedence of the former to the latter.

Forgiveness from Allah as promised here, signifies that not only will men deal kindly and magnanimously with those who spend their wealth in charity, but God also will deal kindly with them. If a man helps the poor, people generally connive at his faults. Similarly, God will pardon his sins and forgive his shortcomings. Nay, He will do more. He will bestow grace and bounty on him, i.e. He will make him prosper and thrive as a result of his charity. The verse also hints that if, in spite of the evil suggestions of Satan, we spend our wealth for the good of humanity, not only shall we prosper individually but also rise as a nation.

Finally God is واسع (Bountiful), hence His bounty will have no limit. He is also عليم (All-Knowing), hence He will help righteous men in ways beyond their wildest imagination.

## 276. Commentary:

The verse points out that the injunction regarding spending wealth in charity, which is the secret of national advancement, is based on

271. And <sup>a</sup>whatsoever you spend or whatsoever vow you vow, Allah surely knows it; and for the wrongdoers there shall be no helpers.<sup>277</sup>

272. If you give <sup>b</sup>alms openly, it is well and good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you; and <sup>c</sup>He will remove from you *many* of your sins. And Allah is aware of what you do.<sup>278</sup>

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ <sup>ط</sup> وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ <sup>(٢٧١)</sup>

إِنْ تَبَدُّوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ <sup>ع</sup> وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهِيَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ <sup>ط</sup> وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ <sup>ط</sup> وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ <sup>(٢٧٢)</sup>

<sup>a</sup>22:30; 76:8. <sup>b</sup>9:60, 103, 104. <sup>c</sup>4:32; 8:30; 29:8; 64:10; 66:9.

wisdom. The word حكمة (wisdom) also alludes to the fulfilment of the prayer which Abraham had offered to God for the raising of a Prophet among the Meccans, who should teach them the Book and Wisdom (2:130).

The people who receive wisdom receive "an abundant good" and are thus sure to thrive and prosper if they act on it.

### 277. Important Words:

نَذَرَ (you vow) is derived from نَذَرَ i.e. he made a vow, thereby binding himself to do an act the doing of which is not obligatory on him; he made a vow dedicating his child for the service of religion. نَذَرَ is a vow by which a man binds himself to do an act not obligatory on him, sometimes conditional on the acquisition of an object or the fulfilment of a desire, in which case it amounts to a conditional promise. The word also signifies a votive offering (Lane & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

There is a tradition to the effect that the Holy Prophet did not approve of making conditional vows for the performance of non-obligatory acts of goodness; but if a man does so, fulfilment of the vow becomes obligatory.

The words *Allah surely knows it* mean that if a man spends in the cause of God, He will appreciate it and follow it with good results.

But as for those who do not spend or who break their vows, the punishment of God will visit such wrongdoers and no friend or sympathizer will be of any help to them. Similarly, in the life to come, neither will God help such men nor will the angels or the Prophets or other holy men help them with their intercession.

### 278. Important Words:

يُكَفِّرُ (will remove) is derived from كَفَرَ (kaffara) which again is derived



from *كفر* (*kafara*) for which see 2:7. They say *كفر عنه سيئته* i.e. (1) He (God) covered or removed, or did away with his sin; (2) He expiated his sin; (3) He effaced or obliterated his sin (Lane).

### Commentary:

Islam has most wisely recommended both forms of giving alms, i.e. open and secret. By giving alms openly, a man sets a good example to others and many begin to imitate him. Secret alms-giving is in many cases better, because in this way one refrains from exposing the poverty of his brethren and there is also little occasion for pride in secret giving. It should be noted that the word *خير* (better) occurring in the verse is qualified by the words "for You", while the word *نعما* (well and good) is not so qualified, which points to the fact that whereas secret giving to the poor is better for the giver, open giving may often be conducive to more good for the Community in general.

Again, the particle *من* (many) in the clause, "many of your sins" may, according to Arabic idiom, either be redundant and used merely for the sake of emphasis, or used in the sense of "many" or "some"; or it denotes *ابتداء الغاية* i.e. the commencement of the limit. Following these different senses and also keeping in view the different meanings of the word *يكفر* (will remove), the clause *ويكفر عنكم من سيئاتكم* may be rendered in four different ways: (1) He (God) will certainly remove from you your sins. (2) He will remove from you many or some of your sins. (3) He will expiate

many or some of your sins for you. (4) He will certainly obliterate, or efface from you, your sins.

In the first and the fourth rendering, the particle *من* has been treated as redundant, used for the sake of emphasis only, and therefore it has been omitted in the translation and the word "certainly" has been added. But if we take the word *من* in the sense of "many" or "some", the meaning of the sentence will be as given in the second and the third rendering.

In the case of the second rendering, the idea is that if we practise charity, those of our sins which are committed against the rights of God will be pardoned, but not those which are committed against the rights of men for which other acts of virtue have been recommended. In the case of the third rendering, the idea is that on the basis of charity practised in accordance with the injunctions of the Quran, God will so arrange that sins committed by the giver of charity, against the rights of men, will be pardoned by the very men who are sinned against.

But as it is possible that even after a man has been pardoned, his sins may continue to rankle in his own mind, so God has promised to show a further favour to those who practise charity according to the teachings of Islam. This promise is implied in the word *يكفر* (efface and obliterate) which is intended to hint that God will make them forget their sins and thus obliterate and efface from their minds all traces of the sins committed

273. <sup>a</sup>It is not thy responsibility to make them follow the right path; but Allah guides whomsoever He pleases. And whatever of wealth you spend, it is for yourselves, while you spend not but to seek the favour of Allah. And whatever of wealth you spend, <sup>b</sup>it shall be paid back to you in full and you shall not be wronged.<sup>279</sup>

274. *These alms are* for the poor who are detained in the cause of Allah and are unable to move about in the land. The ignorant man thinks them to be free from

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي  
مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ  
فَلَا تُنْفِسْكُمْ ۖ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ  
وَجْهِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤَفَّ  
إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٣﴾

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَحْصَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ج

<sup>a</sup>28:57; 92:13. <sup>b</sup>2:282; 4:174; 8:61; 39:11.

by them. This idea has been expressed in the last rendering. Thus a single small sentence has been so worded as to cover all the possible forms of forgiveness, from its lowest phase to its highest manifestation.

### 279. Commentary:

As the verse relates to believers, the word هدى occurring in it does not mean "showing the right path," for believers have already accepted guidance. It means "making them follow the right path". It is indeed God alone Who can enable believers to continue treading on the right path and protect them from the dangers of the way. See also 2:6.

The Quran has here selected the word خَيْر (wealth) instead of any other word meaning wealth or property; for

this word not only signifies "property" but "good and well-earned property". Nay, it signifies even more, for it extends to "anything and everything good". The choice of this word thus greatly extends the scope of charity and does not confine it to the spending of wealth alone. The expression includes the doing of good to mankind in any form.

The clause *while you spend not but to seek the favour of Allah*, is a great tribute to the Companions of the Holy Prophet. They are not bidden to spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of God, but are told that such is already their practice. This is also a form of exhortation which is considered to be more effective than a direct command or prohibition.

want because of *their* abstaining from begging. "Thou shalt know them by their appearance; they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever of wealth you spend, surely, Allah has perfect knowledge thereof."<sup>280</sup>

تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمِهِمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ  
إِلْحَافًا وَمَا تَنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ  
بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

<sup>48:30.</sup>

### 280. Important Words:

ضرباً (move) is from ضرب. They say ضرب الشيء i.e. the thing moved. ضربه means, he struck or beat him with a sword or a stick, etc. ضرب في الارض means, he set out on a journey through the country or he journeyed through it (Aqrab).

عَفَ (abstaining) is derived from عَفَ i.e. he abstained from doing what is unlawful or improper. عَفَفَ in verb form also gives the same meaning with greater effort. عَفَا means, abstaining from the gratification of low desires. So عَفَفَ means, abstaining from what is improper or unlawful (Aqrab).

سوما (appearance) is derived from سوم which is again derived from سام. They say سوم الفرس i.e. he branded the horse with some distinguishing mark or sign. سومة or سيمة or سيما means, a distinguishing sign or mark, or general appearance serving as such (Aqrab).

إِلْحَافًا (with importunity) is derived from لَفَ. They say لَفَهُ i.e. he covered him with a sheet or a blanket, etc. لَفَهُ also gives the same meaning. لَفَ السَّائِلَ

means, the beggar begged with importunity, as if sticking to one like a covering (Aqrab & Mufradât).

### Commentary:

Circumstances sometimes compel people to remain confined in a place where they are unable to earn their living. Such men deserve help from the better-off members of the community. Two kinds of people come particularly under this verse: (1) Those who voluntarily stick to a place owing to the love of a holy man and never quit his company so that they may listen to whatever he says and observe whatever he does and then impart the knowledge thus acquired to others. A remarkable example of persons of this class was Abū Hurairah, who embraced Islam only three years before the death of the Holy Prophet, but thereafter clove to the Mosque at Medina so that he might remain in constant contact with his beloved Master. The result was that he reported to the world a much larger number of the sayings and acts of the Holy Prophet than those reported by even such Companions as

had embraced Islam long before him. (2) Sometimes a Muslim becomes confined to a place owing to the hostility of disbelievers and, being surrounded by persecutors, he has often to suffer extreme hardships and remain without the necessities of life. Such men are also among the fittest objects of help.

People generally help those who beg for help, ignoring those who need help but, through modesty or shyness, do not ask for it. The Quran exhorts Muslims not to confine their charity to those who beg, but also to look for those who are really needy and whom a sense of honour or modesty prevents from begging.

The words, *thou shalt know them by their appearance*, contain a tribute to the Holy Prophet, who is here spoken of as being able to know such persons as are in want but refrain from disclosing their needs to others; and believers are exhorted to follow the example of the Holy Prophet in this respect. Abū Hurairah relates a personal incident which beautifully brings out this characteristic of the Prophet. He says that one day he was suffering from extreme hunger but, as Islam did not approve of begging, he could not ask anybody for food, and at the same time he would not leave the Prophet's mosque for fear of losing his company. At that time Abū Bakr happened to pass by and, in order to draw his attention to his own famished condition, Abū Hurairah asked him to explain a verse of the

Quran which dealt with charity. Abū Bakr, failing to understand his real object, explained to him the verse and passed on. Then came 'Umar, and the hunger-stricken Abū Hurairah approached him also with the request to explain the verse. 'Umar too failed to catch his purpose and, explaining to him the verse, went on his way. The Holy Prophet, who at that time happened to be within hearing inside his house, opened his window and with a bowl of milk in his hand, called Abū Hurairah and smilingly asked him whether he was hungry. And, receiving a reply in the affirmative, he further asked him to invite all the seven men who happened to be present in the mosque at that time. Before handing the cup of milk to Abū Hurairah, the Holy Prophet offered it to those seven men who were also hungry like Abū Hurairah. All the seven drank milk out of the bowl but, says Abū Hurairah, it remained as full as ever. Then the Prophet gave it to Abū Hurairah who drank his fill. When Abū Hurairah could drink no more, the Holy Prophet took the bowl and drank the remaining milk (Tirmidhī ch. on *Zuhd*).

The verse incidentally praises those who abstain from begging and hints at the impropriety of begging as the words *تَعَفَّفَ* (abstaining from an improper or unlawful thing) and *الْهَانَ* (with importunity) clearly indicate. The Holy Prophet greatly disapproved of begging and there are diverse sayings of his to that effect.

**R. 38.**

275. "Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them *shall come* no fear, nor shall they grieve."<sup>281</sup>

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ  
رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ  
يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>13:23; 14:32; 16:76; 35:30.

**281. Important Words:**

عند (with) signifies, with, besides, at, near, by, or in the presence of, etc. It also implies possession, as one says عنده خير وفضل i.e. he possesses goodness and excellence. ملوك الارض عند الله تراب means, the kings of the earth are like dust compared with God. عند also signifies, in one's mind, or in one's opinion or estimation (Aqrab & Lane).

**Commentary:**

Islamic commandments have been so made as to meet the exigencies of all times and all seasons. For instance, lunar months which rotate all through the year, have been appointed for the observance of fasts and the performance of Pilgrimage, so that Muslims may keep fasts and perform Pilgrimage both in summer and winter, spring and autumn. Similarly, the five daily Prayers and the two supererogatory Prayers—تَهَجُّد (tahajjud) and ضُحَى (ḍuḥā), which are said respectively in the latter part of the night and in the forenoon, are so timed that a Muslim practically performs Prayers at all hours of the day and night. Similarly, charity is to be performed during both day and night, so that this righteous act of

man may cover every hour of his life.

Observe also the beautiful order of the words. The word "secretly" corresponds to *night*, and the word "openly" to *day*. Thus a Muslim has to expend his wealth in the cause of Allah not only in such a way and at such a time that others may be induced to follow his good example by noticing his charity, but also at such time and in such a way that even the recipient of his charity may not know the donor.

It may be noted here that alms are of two kinds: (1) obligatory زَكَاة (Zakāh), and (2) supererogatory صَدَقَةٌ (Ṣadaqah). Zakāh is collected by the state from every man of a prescribed measure of wealth and is then spent by the state on helping the poor and needy, orphans, widows and wayfarers, etc. In this case, the recipients do not know any particular donor and thus preserve their sense of self-respect. But as Zakāh is collected by the state, people are apt to look upon it as a tax and not as charity. So Islam has instituted Ṣadaqah also which is voluntary and is given to individuals out of a desire to help the poor and needy. Thus Ṣadaqah engenders feelings of sympathy

276. Those <sup>a</sup>who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is because they say: 'Trade *also* is like interest;' whereas Allah has made trade lawful and made interest unlawful. So he to whom an admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, then will that *which he received* in the past be his; and his affair is with Allah. And those who revert *to it*, they are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.<sup>282</sup>

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا  
كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ  
الْمَسِّ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ  
الرِّبَا ۚ وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا ۚ فَمَنْ  
فَعَلَ مِثْلَ مَا سَلَفَ ۚ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٧٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:131; 30:40.

among the well-to-do towards their brethren and feelings of gratefulness among the poor for their benefactors. It also serves to distinguish sincere believers from the insincere.

## 282. Important Words:

ربوا (interest) is derived from ربا. They say ربا المال i.e. the money or property increased and became augmented. ربا means, an excess and an addition; an addition over and above the principal sum; interest. The ḥadīth defines ربا as ربا كل قرض جرمفعة فهو ربا i.e. every loan advanced to draw profit comes under the definition of interest (Ṣaghīr).

يتخبطه (has smitten) is derived from خطه i.e. he struck or beat him violently; he trod him under his feet vehemently. خط الليل means, he walked about in the darkness of the night

without finding the true way. تخبطه means, he struck or beat him violently. تخبطه الشيطان means, Satan struck him and afflicted him with hurt or injury; Satan prostrated him (Aqrab).

مس (insanity) is derived from مس. They say مسه i.e. he touched it; or he touched it with his hand. من المرض او الكبر means, disease or old age touched him, i.e. came on him. مسه الشيطان بنصب means, Satan brought pain and trouble on him. المس means, any pain or trouble, etc. that comes to a man by coming in contact with someone or something; it also signifies madness or insanity (Aqrab & Lane).

## Commentary:

The prohibition against lending money on interest is preceded by a long exhortation to exercise charity. When a person becomes accustomed to spending his wealth in charity and

alms, it becomes easier for him to lend money free of interest.

The Quran prohibits all kinds of interest. In modern times, however, business has become so inseparably mixed up with interest that it appears impossible to avoid interest altogether. But if a change of system as well as of surroundings and circumstances were brought about, business without interest would establish itself in the world as was the case in the days when Islam was in ascendancy.

The clause, *those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with inanity*, means that just as a madman does not see the consequences of his actions, similarly those who lend money at interest become careless of consequences. They keep in view only their own immediate interests and do not care, and in fact generally become incapable of caring, for the great harm which they do to society and the world at large. Interest also encourages a person or a government to incur debt beyond his or its capacity and in this way also blinds them to consequences. Another way in which interest causes a touch of insanity is to weaken the sense of goodness and beneficence in man by making him over-engrossed in money-making. Interest also leads to war. Money-lenders are always creating circumstances which may cause conflict between one nation and another so that war may break out and the belligerent nations may be compelled to borrow money from them. Interest also helps to prolong

war by encouraging belligerent nations to borrow money beyond their capacity. Again, interest helps the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and thereby most injuriously affects the distribution of wealth and the balance of society. Yet another manifestation of madness caused by interest is that those who pay interest have their sense of dignity lowered and they contract the habit of carelessness and hastiness, thus acquiring a resemblance to one stricken by madness. See also 2:280 below.

The words, *trade also is like interest*, represent the pet argument of the supporters of interest. They say interest is nothing but a form of trade. Just as in trade one invests money with a view to increasing and multiplying it, so does one in lending money at interest. But deeper thinking would reveal that there is a world of difference between the two. While interest is attended by all the evil consequences briefly referred to above, trade is not.

The words, *then will that which he received in the past be his*, mean that if one accepts guidance from God and desists from charging interest in future, the past will be forgiven him and God will make good the loss he may thus suffer by other means.

It should be remembered that any sum stipulated to be received or given over and above what one advances or receives as a loan is interest, whether the dealing is with an individual or a bank or a society or a post office or any other organisation. Interest is not confined to money. It extends to any

277. Allah will abolish interest and <sup>a</sup>will cause charity to increase. And Allah loves not anyone who is a confirmed disbeliever and an arch-sinner.<sup>283</sup>

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُزِيلُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>30:40.

commodity which is given as a loan with the condition that it will be returned with an agreed excess.

Finally, it may be noted that in view of the peculiar conditions of the present times, when there is a vicious network of the interest system surrounding us and Islam is in a greatly weakened condition, the Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement has declared that if a person is forced to accept interest, he may do so and then spend the money thus received on (a) the propagation of Islam, and (b) paying off any interest that he may similarly be forced to pay. He should, however, scrupulously avoid spending such money on himself or his family or using it in any other way (Fatāwā & Al-Faḍl).

### 283. Important Words:

يَمْحَقُ (abolish) is derived from مَحَقَ which means, he abolished or annulled or obliterated a thing; he annihilated it; he rendered a thing deficient and deprived it of its blessing of increase (Aqrab).

يُزِيلُ (will cause to increase) is from the same root as زَيْلٌ (interest) for which see 2:276.

### Commentary:

The verse hints not only that Allah

is abolishing interest and declaring it to be unlawful but that a time is coming when interest will be blotted out from the world and charity and alms will take its place. This promise was first fulfilled by the ascendancy of Islam in the East and the West, and now that the Promised Messiah, with whose advent the second and universal rise of Islam has been prophesied, has appeared, the promise will again be fulfilled by the re-ascendancy of Islam in the four corners of the world.

The words, *Allah will abolish interest and will cause charity to increase*, also contain the secret of world prosperity. If nations desire to prosper, they should stop the giving and taking of interest and practise charity instead. It is of interest to note that the word يَرْبِي (will cause to increase) is from the same root as رِبَا (interest). The clause thus beautifully hints that whereas the world looks upon the taking of interest as a means of increase, the real means thereof lies in charity. The words also mean that God, in His dealings with men, will deal kindly by those who spend their wealth in charity so that they will eventually prosper and thrive, while those who lend or borrow money at interest will be punished by God.



278. Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, and <sup>a</sup>observe Prayer and pay the Zakāh, shall have their reward from their Lord, and no fear *shall come* on them, nor shall they grieve.<sup>284</sup>

279. O ye who believe! fear Allah and relinquish what remains of interest, if you are believers.<sup>285</sup>

280. But if you do *it* not, then beware of war from Allah and His Messenger; and if you repent, then you shall have your original sums; *thus* you shall not wrong, nor shall you be wronged.<sup>286</sup>

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ  
أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٢٧٨﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا  
بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧٩﴾

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ  
وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ  
أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:4.

### 284. Commentary:

The verse points out that abstaining from interest and giving money in charity are highly righteous deeds and the righteous will have their reward with God. The verse also declares that in order to attain salvation (1) one must have true faith, and (2) do righteous deeds; and of the righteous deeds the verse singles out the two most important ones: firstly, the observance of Prayers, which pertains to the rights of God; and secondly, the giving of Zakāh which pertains to the rights of men. The noble spirit underlying the commandment relating to Zakāh runs counter to the evil spirit underlying the practice of

giving and taking interest.

### 285. Commentary:

The verse hints that the taking of interest is against God-fearingness. The Creator loves goodness and beneficence towards the poor and the needy, fair and equitable distribution of wealth among people, and peace among the nations of the world; but the system of interest strikes at the very root of these blessings. The closing words of the verse hint that the taking of interest is also against true belief.

### 286. Important Words:

فَاذْنُوا (then beware of) is derived from اذن. They say اذن له i.e. he gave ear

or listened to it or him; he permitted, or allowed him. *أذن بالشيء* means, he knew the thing; or he became informed or apprised of it. *أذنه بالأمر* means, he made him to know the thing; or he notified or announced it to him. *أذن* (*adhdhana*) or *تأذن* (*ta'adhdhana*) means, he made known or notified or announced (Lane).

*حربه* (war) is from *حرب*. They say *حربه* i.e. he despoiled him of his wealth and property, leaving him without anything. *حرب* (*hariba*) means, he became greatly angry, or wrathful. *الحرب* means, war; hostilities (Aqrab).

*رؤس* (your original sums). *رؤس* is the plural of *رأس* meaning: (1) head; (2) the upper or higher part or end of a thing; (3) chief or leader of a society. *رأس الشهر* means, the first day of the month. The word *رأس* also signifies the thing itself; as they say *هو قسم برأسه* i.e. this is an independent species in itself. *رأس المال* means, the original sum without interest; principal; capital. The Arabs say *اقرضني* *عشرة برؤسها* i.e. he lent me a loan of ten pieces of money without interest (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The verse declares that the taking of interest is tantamount to waging war against God. It may be inferred from this that those among Muslims who lend money at interest, should be boycotted by the rest of the community. History bears testimony to the fact that such Muslim States as borrowed or lent money at interest were ruined.

It is often objected that no trade or

commerce is possible without interest. This is not correct. There is no natural relation between trade and interest. The latter has become unconsciously associated with the former, as Western countries have based their commercial system on credit. If this had not been so, commerce would not have been dependent upon interest. Only a few hundred years ago, Muslims were responsible for a large part of the world's commerce, and yet they carried it on without interest. They used to borrow money even from the poorer classes by way of partnership loans, and the commerce carried on by them thus contributed directly to the welfare of those classes. Interest is not at all essential for commerce, but as commerce is now being carried on, on the basis of interest, it appears as if without interest it would come to a standstill. No doubt, a change in the system would at first be inconvenient but the system of commerce depending upon interest can certainly be discarded.

Interest is, in fact, a leech which is fast sucking away the blood of humanity, especially of the lower and middle classes. Even the upper classes are not entirely secure against its poison, but they are deriving a false enjoyment from it like the proverbial leopard who ate away his own tongue by rubbing it against a rough stone, foolishly thinking it to be the blood and flesh of another animal. Unfortunately those who are willing to forego it are too weak to withstand the force of the current system.

281. And if any *debtor* be in straitened circumstances, then grant *him* respite till a time of ease. And that you remit it as charity shall be better for you, if only you knew.<sup>287</sup>

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ  
وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ  
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨١﴾

The system of credit prevailing in Western countries is destructive to the peace of the world in two ways. On the one hand, it helps the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and, on the other, it facilitates war. No government can be imagined as entering upon a great war unless it relies upon its ability to raise money by means of loans carrying interest. Long and devastating wars are made possible only by the institution of interest. If huge loans on interest were not possible, many countries would refuse to enter what appeared to be a long war; and if they entered such wars at all, they would certainly hasten to withdraw from them long before they actually terminated, for their treasuries would become empty and their people would revolt in protest against the criminal waste of men and money. But the system of what appear to be easy loans makes it possible for governments to carry on ruinous struggles as they are able to obtain the sinews of war without having to resort to a system of direct taxation. The people of belligerent countries do not, at the moment, feel the burden which is laid on their backs, but after the war is over their backs are bent double under the staggering weight of national debts and future generations are kept busy

reducing the weight. Take, for instance, the case of the last Great War. If huge loans had not been possible, the result of the war would still have been the same, but the devastation and the heavy indebtedness of the different countries would have been avoided. Nay, the War itself might have been avoided; and even if it had taken place, the belligerents would soon have been exhausted, peace would have been signed within a year, and the world would have proceeded on its forward march of progress. A worse fate is perhaps awaiting the Western countries at the termination of the present World War.

### 287. Commentary:

The preceding verse enjoined the taking back of the original sums only. The present verse further exhorts the creditor to grant delay to a debtor in straitened circumstances.

Creditors are exhorted to deal kindly and beneficently with their brethren so that God may also (deal with them kindly. They should remember that if they have advanced loans to others, God has also advanced certain loans to them by conferring on them His numberless favours and bounties; and if they have a right to charge interest, God

282. And fear the day when you shall be made to return to Allah; <sup>a</sup>then shall every soul be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged.<sup>288</sup>

**R. 39.**

283. O ye who believe! when you borrow one from another for a fixed period, then write it down. And let a scribe write *it* in your presence faithfully; and no scribe should refuse to write, because <sup>b</sup>Allah has taught him, so let him write and let him who incurs the liability dictate; and he should fear Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything therefrom. But if the person incurring the liability be of low understanding or be weak or be unable himself to dictate, then let someone who can watch his interest dictate with justice. And call two witnesses from among your men; and if two men be

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ  
تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ  
لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨٣﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى  
أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُبَ بَيْنَكُمْ  
كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ  
يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ  
وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ  
وَلَا يَبْخُسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي  
عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا  
يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمْلَ لَهُ فُلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيَّهُ  
بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ  
رِّجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ  
فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتْنِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:273. <sup>b</sup>96:5.

has also a right to make heavy demands from them, but He does not. And if He did, what would be the fate of man?

**288. Commentary:**

The verse sums up the discussion on the subject of taking interest by warning the people that the day is coming when they will be made to

stand before God and render an account of their deeds. They should remember the principle, "Do as you would be done by". The Holy Prophet is reported to have said,

"None of you can be deemed to be a true believer, unless he likes for his brother what he likes for himself" (Bukhārī & Muslim).

not *available*, then a man and two women, of such as you like as witnesses, so that if either of two women should err in memory, then one may remind the other. And the witnesses should not refuse when they are called. And do not feel weary of writing it down, whether it be small or large, along with its appointed time of payment. This is more equitable in the sight of Allah and makes testimony surer and is more likely to keep you away from doubts; *therefore omit not to write*<sup>a</sup> except that it be ready merchandise which you give or take from hand to hand, in which case it shall be no sin for you that you write it not. And have witnesses when you sell one to another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness. And if you do *that*, then certainly it shall be disobedience on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah grants you knowledge and Allah knows all things well.<sup>289</sup>

الشَّهَدَاءَ أَنْ تَضِلَّ أَحَدُهُمَا فَتَذَكَّرَ  
أَحَدُهُمَا الْآخَرَىٰ وَلَا يَأْبَ الشَّهَدَاءُ  
إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْمَوْنَ أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ  
صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ ذِكُّكُمْ أَقْسَطُ  
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا  
تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً  
تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ  
أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهَدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ  
وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا  
فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ  
وَيَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:30.

### 289. Important Words:

وليه (someone who can watch his interest). ولي means, friend; helper; guardian of one's affairs; he who

protects or watches one's interests (Aqrab). See also 2:108.

### Commentary:

As the preceding verses prohibit

interest and enjoin that only the original sum taken as a loan be returned to the creditor, the Quran now fittingly turns to the subject of loans not carrying interest. The verse enjoins that all transactions regarding loans should be committed to writing. It is really amazing, and is indeed a wonderful testimony to its Divine origin, that the Quran, which was revealed about 1,350 years ago when the art of writing was yet in its infancy, should lay so much stress on writing down all transactions.

The verse should not be interpreted to signify that only such transactions should be committed to writing as have a fixed term for the paying back of a loan. The injunction is general and is meant to obviate or minimize disputes so as to leave no room for doubt as to whether any amount has really been lent and as to the amount of the money lent. The words, *for a fixed period*, have been added to emphasize the additional fact that whenever a loan is advanced, a term must be fixed.

The verse further enjoins that when a transaction is made on credit, the document drawn up should be written by a third person so that there may be little chance of fraud and neither of the parties may have a cause of complaint against the other, both standing on the same level.

The borrower, and not the lender, is to dictate because: (1) it is the borrower who incurs the liability, and justice demands that words defining the liability should not only be well known to, but also selected by him;

(2) the document is to be deposited with the lender and not the borrower. So the borrower has been asked to dictate so that the fact of his having dictated may serve as a proof of the correctness of the amount and the condition about payment, and he may have no ground to deny it. The clause, *he should not diminish anything therefrom*, have been added because loans may be of different kinds. They may not always be in cash and may be for long terms and there may also be certain conditions attached to them. In such cases it sometimes happens that in drawing up documents, people resort to trickery and leave loopholes. So borrowers (who have to dictate) have been warned against such evil practices and have been enjoined to fear God and dictate with honesty and justice.

In the clause, *and call two witnesses from among your men*, the word "your" has been most wisely added to imply that the witnesses should not be strangers but should be known men residing in the same locality so that, if need arises, they may be easily summoned to give evidence. The words "such as you like", point to the fact that the witnesses, whether men or women, should be desirable persons and should enjoy the confidence of both parties.

The clause, *and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness*, signifies that if the scribe is a professional man, he should be duly paid for his services; otherwise wrong would be done to him. Similarly, a

284. And if you be on a journey, and you find not a scribe, then let there be a pledge with possession. And if one of you entrusts another with something, then let him who is entrusted surrender his trust and let him fear Allah, his Lord. And conceal not testimony; and whoever <sup>a</sup>conceals it, his heart is certainly sinful. And Allah is well aware of what you do.<sup>290</sup>

وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا  
فَرِهْنِجْ مَقْبُوضَةً ۖ فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُم  
بَعْضًا فليؤدِّ الَّذِي أُوتِيَ مَأْمَنَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ  
اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ ۖ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ ۚ وَمَنْ  
يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ إِثْمٌ قَلْبُهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا  
تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ۝

<sup>a</sup>2:141; 5:107.

person should not be compelled, so far as possible, to become a witness if it causes him loss of any kind. Again, the scribe or the witnesses should also be paid their travelling and other necessary expenses when they are summoned before a Qāḍī or judge. The words also hint that the witnesses and the scribe should not be forced or threatened or bribed or otherwise influenced to suppress the truth or tell a falsehood when called upon to give evidence.

### 290. Important Words:

رهان (pledge) is derived from رهن. They say رهن الشيء فلانا او عند فلان i.e. he deposited the thing with him or gave it in his possession as a pledge or security for a debt, etc. رهن is one who makes such a pledge and مرهن is one who receives it. رهين and مرهون mean, the thing so pledged; the thing placed or kept in custody in lieu of a debt, etc. رهان which is the noun-infinitive from رهن and رهن (rahn)

which is the noun-infinitive from رهن (rahana) mean, the act of pledging; also the thing pledged. رهان is also the plural of رهن (Aqrab & Lane).

امانة (trust) and اوتمن (is entrusted) and امن (entrusts) are all derived from the same root. امن means, he trusted or he entrusted. ائتمن فلانا على كذا means, he trusted him with that; he deposited it with him as a trust. امانة means, the thing committed to the trust and care of a person; also honesty, faithfulness and trustworthiness (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

If a scribe is not available, loans may be advanced in the form of pledges, one party receiving the loan of money and the other the thing pledged in lieu of this loan. This form of practical transaction, the verse goes on to explain, will be in the nature of an امانة i.e. a trust or deposit affecting both parties. By classing a loan with a trust, it is hinted that loans should be returned with the

**R. 40.**

285. To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and whether you disclose what is in your minds or keep it hidden, Allah <sup>a</sup>will call you to account for it; <sup>b</sup>then will He forgive whomsoever He pleases and punish whomsoever He pleases; and Allah has the power to do all that He wills.<sup>291</sup>

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَاِنْ تَبَدَّلُوا مَا فِيْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ تَخْفَوْهُ يَحٰسِبْكُمْ بِهٖ اللّٰهُ ۚ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>21:48. <sup>b</sup>5:19, 41; 48:15.

same care and the same honesty with which property deposited as a trust is returned on demand.

The words, *and conceal not testimony*, either refer to the testimony of such witnesses as may be present at the time of the pledge, or it may refer to the testimony of the parties themselves. When no other witness is available, the parties are themselves treated as such and may be called upon to give a true account of the affairs on oath.

The expression, *his heart is sinful*, signifies that he who conceals testimony commits a sin which has not a temporary effect but vitiates the innermost recesses of his heart. Nay, it is a sign of the fact that his heart has already become vitiated.

**291. Commentary:**

In this and the following two verses, with which the present *Sūrah* concludes, the subject of تزكية (*tazkiyah*) or purification has been dealt with as promised in the prayer

of Abraham (2:130). By reminding us that to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, the Quran teaches us that, since everything is God's, we must avoid all those things which He requires us to avoid and adopt all those which He requires us to adopt. If we obey the commandments of God, which are meant for our own good, He will cause us to thrive and prosper, for He is the Controller of all causes and all effects.

The verse embodies the great secret of attaining purification. That secret is, that if you wish to become pure, you should begin with the root, i.e. you should make your hearts pure. Says the Holy Prophet: "In the body of man there is a piece of flesh; if this piece of flesh is sound, the whole body becomes sound; if it is corrupt, the whole body becomes corrupt. Behold! It is the heart" (Bukhārī).

The particle *بِ* (for) in the Arabic clause rendered as, *Allah will call you to account for it*, means: (a) by means



286. This Messenger of Ours believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so do the believers: all of them believe in Allah, and in His angels, and in His Books, and in His Messengers, saying,

أَمِنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ  
وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ  
وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ  
رُسُلِهِ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا

of or on the basis of; (b) for or because of. Following the first meaning, the verse would mean "Allah will call you to account by means of it or on the basis of it", i.e. your actions will be judged on the basis of that which is in your hearts. They will be weighed from the point of view of your motives. This is another way of saying, in the words of the Holy Prophet, *أما الأعمال بالنيات* i.e. Surely, the actions of men will be judged by the intention or the motive with which they are performed (Bukhārī). Following the second meaning of it, the verse would mean, "Allah will call you to account for it or because of it", i.e. no human thought will be lost, however hidden it may be and that it will be requited or pardoned as Allah may will it.

In connection with the words, *whether you keep it hidden*, it should be remembered that God will not call man to account for passing or momentary thoughts that sometimes cross his mind, for they are beyond one's control. In 2:287 we read, "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity", and it is certainly beyond our "capacity" to check the fleeting thoughts that occasionally flash across our minds. It is only the

evil thoughts that we cherish and harbour in our minds, such as malice, envy, etc., and we shall be called to account for only the evil designs that we knowingly evolve and contemplate. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that God has commanded the angels saying: "If a servant of mine thinks of doing an evil deed, do not write it down against him; but if he carries out his intention, then write it down. And if he intends to do a good deed, but abstains from doing it, write it down as one good act; and if he actually does a good deed then let it be noted as ten acts of virtue" (Tirmidhī).

The expression, *whomsoever He pleases*, does not mean that God acts, as it were, arbitrarily without law or purpose. In the Quranic idiom the expression, "the will or pleasure of God," rather denotes the existence of a natural law (7:157). But as in the case of Allah it is His will which stands for His Law, therefore the Quran uses this expression to point out that (1) God is the final authority in the universe; and that (2) His will is the law; and that (3) His will manifests itself in a just and benevolent manner, for He is the possessor of perfect attributes (17:111).

<sup>a</sup>‘We make no distinction between any of His Messengers;’ and they say, ‘We hear, and we obey. <sup>b</sup>*We implore Thy forgiveness, O our Lord, and to Thee is the returning.*’<sup>292</sup>

غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٩٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:137. <sup>b</sup>3:148, 194; 60:6.

### 292. Important Words:

غُفْرَانَكَ (Thy forgiveness). غُفْرَان is the noun-infinitive from غَفَرَ for which see 2:59 and 2:200. غُفْرَان on the part of God signifies, covering man with mercy and forgiveness and saving him from the punishment of sins. It is used in the infinitive form for the sake of emphasis, words like "I or we implore" being understood before it.

### Commentary:

The mention of the believers along with the Prophet has a special significance in the verse; the purifying influence of the Holy Prophet has brought into existence a class of men who have become purified both in belief and in deeds, thus fulfilling the object for which the Prophet for whom Abraham had prayed was to make his appearance.

Good deeds are indeed the principal means for the attainment of purification, but they have their origin in the purity of the heart, which can be attained only by holding true beliefs. Hence, the verse details the fundamental points of belief which the Holy Prophet taught his followers, i.e. belief in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers, mentioned in their natural order.

Among the points of belief detailed here, one is that true believers say, *We make no distinction between any of His Messengers*. This means that true believers should accept all the Messengers of God, without exception, and should make no distinction between them by accepting some and rejecting others. There is in this, food for thought for those Muslims who reject the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, whom God raised in fulfilment of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet and who came to demonstrate the truth of Islam, by cogent reasons and powerful signs.

Another very important means of attaining purification is prayer. The verse represents true believers as offering prayer to God in the ennobling words, *We hear and we obey. We implore Thy forgiveness, O our Lord, and to Thee is the returning*. This prayer contains four basic elements of purification: (1) man should ever be prepared to listen to God's commandments; (2) he should be ever ready to obey His commandments, whatever the circumstances; (3) he should always be asking for God's forgiveness for his sins and shortcomings; and (4) he

287. <sup>a</sup>Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity. It shall have *the reward* it earns, and it shall get *the punishment* it incurs. Our Lord, do not punish us, if we forget or fall into error; and our Lord, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear; and efface our *sins*, and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us; Thou art our Master; <sup>b</sup>so help us Thou against the disbelieving people. **292A**

لَا يَكْلِفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا  
كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنَا لَا  
تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا  
تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إَصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى  
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا  
طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا  
وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى  
الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٨٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:234. <sup>b</sup>3:148.

should never forget that he will one day return to, and stand before, his Maker and will render an account of his works.

### 292A. Important Words:

اصرا (responsibility). They say اصرا i.e. he broke the thing. اصرا means, be confined or detained or debarred him; he held him in custody or he restrained him. اصرا الحيمة means, he provided the tent with a peg or a rope for tying. اصرا (isr.) or اصرا (asr) or اصرا (usr) means: (1) a burden which restrains one from motion; (2) a burdensome covenant or a heavy responsibility the breaking of which makes one deserving of punishment; (3) a sin, or an offence; and (4) grievous punishment of a sin (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The clause, *Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity*, is a powerful refutation of the doctrine of Atonement. It embodies two important principles: (1) That the commandments of God are always given with due regard for human capacities and weaknesses. (2) That purification in this world does not necessarily signify complete freedom from all kinds of failings and shortcomings. All that man is expected to do is sincerely to strive after good and avoid sin to the best of his power, and the rest will be forgiven him by the Merciful God. So no atonement is needed.

The word كسب (earns) has been used here with regard to the doing of

good deeds and اكتسب (incurs) for the doing of evil deeds. They are from the same root but the latter denotes greater exertion. Thus the words hint that a man will be rewarded for good deeds even if they are done casually and without concentrated effort, while he will be punished for his evil deeds only if they are committed deliberately and with concentrated effort.

In ordinary circumstances, نسيان (forgetfulness) and خطأ (error) are not punishable, for they lack intention or motive which are necessary for punishment. But here the words denote a forgetfulness and an error which might have been avoided, if due care had been exercised.

As explained under Important Words above, the word اصر (responsibility) has several connotations, all of which are applicable here. Hence, the verse may also be translated as (a) Impose not on us a sin, i.e. enable us to avoid sin and prevent us from the doing of deeds which might make us stumble; (b) Do not punish us if we commit some sin or break some covenant; (c) Taking the expression لا تحمل علينا to mean, as it literally does, do not make it ride us or do not mount it on us, the clause may also be rendered as, do not make a responsibility or a covenant mount on us as Thou didst mount it on those before us. The simile is beautiful. divine covenants are meant to help the people in their onward march; but sometimes, through abuse or breach, they become a burden, instead of a help, thus turning into a rider in place

of a riding beast. Muslims are taught to pray against such an eventuality.

The words, *lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us*, do not mean that Muslims have been taught to wish for lighter burdens. The facts of history belie that inference. The words only mean that God may help Muslims to fulfil their responsibilities and to avoid sins as well as the consequences thereof. The previous peoples were entrusted with some responsibilities and given certain commandments which were all for their own good, but many of them failed to fulfil them and also rejected Islam to which they had been invited and thus turned a blissful guidance into a veritable means of incurring God's displeasure. Thus, they were virtually laid under an *isr* or a burdensome responsibility. Muslims, being the bearers of the final and universal Shari'ah, have been exhorted to set a better example and pray to God for success in their great task and in the fulfilment of their heavy responsibilities. The laying of *burden* or *burdensome responsibility* has been attributed to God just as in the Quranic idiom ضلالة (misguidance) is sometimes attributed to Him for which see 2:7.

The clause, *lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay on those before us*, may also refer to Christians particularly who, by declaring the Law to be a curse, converted a divine mercy into an *isr*, i.e. a burden and a punishment. Muslims are thus taught to pray that

for them the Sharī‘ah may always remain a mercy. In this case the verse comes as a fitting preamble to the succeeding *Sūrah* of which Christianity forms the special theme.

The clause, *and efface our sins and grant us Forgiveness and have Mercy on us*, comprises three important invocations placed in perfect order. They not only correspond to the preceding three prayers but also constitute a perfect manifestation of a perfect treatment on the part of a perfect Master. *فَاعْفُ عَنَّا* means that God may efface our sins and leave out no trace of them to be seen by men. *اغْفِرْ لَنَا* means that He may not only efface our sins but also grant us forgiveness so that He Himself may treat them as non-existent. And *ارْحَمْنَا* means that God may not only efface our sins and

forgive us but also show positive mercy to us.

The concluding clause, *help us Thou against the disbelieving people*, provides a fitting ending to the *Sūrah*. The Muslims are out for a great struggle. The entire world of *كُفْر* (disbelief) is arrayed against them and the field of work, as hinted in Abraham’s prayer (2:130), is wide and far-stretched, extending over (1) heavenly signs, (2) laws and covenants, (3) wisdom and philosophy, (4) morals and spirituality, and (5) general progress. This was a stupendous task and unless God came to their help, there was little hope for that tiny Muslim community that was just emerging into existence. But God did come to their help.